

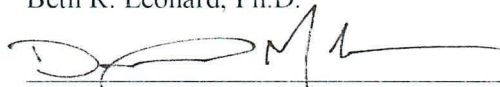
USE OF TLINGIT ART AND IDENTITY
BY NON-TLINGIT PEOPLE IN SITKA, ALASKA


By

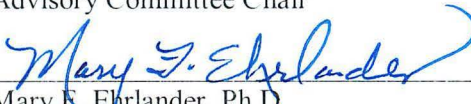
David Kreiss-Tomkins

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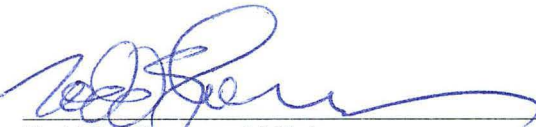

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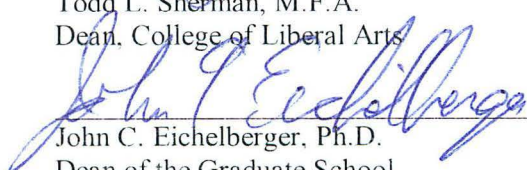

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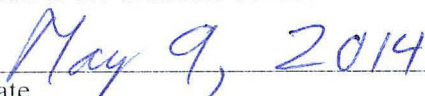

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USE OF TLINGIT ART AND IDENTITY
BY NON-TLINGIT PEOPLE IN SITKA, ALASKA

A
THESIS

Presented to the Faculty
of the University of Alaska Fairbanks

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

David Kreiss-Tomkins, B.A.

Fairbanks, Alaska

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ABSTRACT

Tlingit culture, as with many Indigenous cultures that exist under colonial rule, is often described as being in danger of disappearing. Despite this, the appropriation of and subsequent use of cultural practices by non-Tlingit people, and especially white people, is a continuation of the process of colonization when it is enacted in a manner that is not critical of current and historical racism, capitalist pressures and colonial violence. This project addresses the topic through recorded conversations with seven Tlingit women in Sitka, Alaska in an attempt to place Tlingit cultural production and use in the broader contexts of Indigenous cultural sovereignty and resistance to US imperial power. While various types and extremes of cultural appropriation are examined and compared to theory examining privilege and oppression, this project does not delineate general rules for appropriate and inappropriate use of culture.

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I would like to first thank the seven women who agreed to share their experiences, political critiques, stories of trauma and excitement, theory and hopes with me through the conversations that they allowed me to record. Their patience and kindness with me and my attempts at organizing a research model was evident throughout the years over which I prolonged my academic studies. I am honored to present you here with the five women who desired that they be publically connected to this thesis. Their names are Peg Blumer, Judy (K̲aachkaadu.aat) Brady, Cayrn V. Coleman, Sharon A. McIndoo (Shaawatgeigei) and X̲'asheech Tl̲áa (Louise Brady). They, along with the two other women have invested significant time and thought into the subjects presented within. Any positive results that this work may produce ultimately are the product of their labor.

In addition, I would like to thank my advisory committee and chair. Dr. Sarah Stanley also helped with critiques of structure and content. Dr. Mary Ehrlander reviewed my writing and pushed me to better defend my arguments; as department head she also provided me with the teaching assistantship that allowed me to more easily fund this research. In addition to their advice on the text, all of them inspired me through the courses I took from them and the materials to which they introduced me. Any unwieldy writing or poor logic is the result of my own process and is not for their lack of attempts to repair it.

INTRODUCTION

This project is the result of my desire to examine systems of white privilege as they relate to Tlingit people in the community in which I grew up. My interest in this topic originates from multiple, complex sources that include my parents' interests, the childhood friendships I relied on, the work of my grade school teachers, and, no doubt, many other influences of which I was, and am still, not aware. However, my first memory of thinking critically about race and privilege belongs to my time as an undergraduate student. Having grown up in Sitka, a town of about 8,000 people on the outside coast of an island in the southeastern archipelago of Alaska, going to Oberlin College, a small school in northern Ohio, was an education in many things beyond the topics of the courses I took. I found that one of the greatest opportunities available was to learn from fellow students who had already spent years thinking about and challenging social injustice in their own communities. From them I learned to enjoy the unending difficulty of thinking about my own involvement as a young white man raised by a heteronormative couple, of whom one was a doctor, in a society that has a certain terror of addressing topics that directly address race, gender, class, sexuality, age, and, of course, many other exciting topics. From these friends, I then was able to adjust the direction of my studies and take advantage of the excellent teachers available in departments of the school I had not previously thought of investigating. My own politics, then, reflect a bias towards the feminist teachings of Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, Gloria Anzaldúa, and many others. Returning to Alaska, I was curious to see how white privilege operates in Sitka, a community that, as part of Alaska and thus the social construct of the north, is located within a land that is exoticized and marketed for its remoteness, its wildness, and its perception of being untouched and pristine while at the same time is also the home of the Tlingit, the first people of Sitka, who have a history of being portrayed by white people as unclean, dangerous and unable to control the substances that they consume. The stark disconnect between

the constructions of the land and the land's first people works conveniently to separate the two, thus aiding in the white community's ability to frame their access to the land and the land's resources as legitimate and necessary.

Colonization, a word that invokes images of pilgrims, white families on homesteads and missionaries, is part of the unspoken system that grants the largely invisible resources that allow white people to accomplish goals in life without having to answer to the constant scrutiny of society. While European and United States settlers, military assaults and expeditions were and still are a part of the colonial process, part of what I am interested in is if the framing of land and Tlingit people described above, and the subsequent possession of Tlingit culture that is left without a context given to it in part by the land, can be seen as colonization in addition to the historic and current struggles over Tlingit land. To realize this, I must find that the construction of Tlingit culture in white culture is similar to how Tlingit land is framed: that is, as a culture that is wild, untouched and pristine and thus desirous to white people seeking, as they have sought the Indigenous lands of Alaska, a new start, a space to refresh or cleanse oneself, or an exciting adventure. If this is found, then the resulting separation not only applies to the land and the first peoples of the land, but to the culture of the Tlingit people and their own identity. Thus, not only is the land colonized and removed from use by Tlingit people, but also the culture.

Several of the theorists I recruit to help me examine colonization use the word genocide to describe historical and, even, current governmental and institutional practices against Native people in the United States and in Alaska. Conservative definitions of genocide, including that which has been adopted by the United Nations, easily match the historical relationship between the United States and Native people. I rely on broader definitions of genocide to understand current practices of the combination of separating children from families through denial of funding to local schools, systemic jailing of Native people, killing through police violence, and

many of the other more violence assimilationist practices that work to fulfill the narrative of vanishing Native peoples.

To examine the extent of non-Tlingit use of Tlingit culture, I recorded seventeen conversations with seven Tlingit women from Sitka who work, or have worked, in the field of domestic violence about aspects of their identity that related to the topics of race, gender, and cultural production; whether they see non-Tlingit use of Tlingit culture; the harm or benefit incurred by the Tlingit community through any witnessed use of culture; and, finally, the method through which any instance of harm occurred and how that method compared with existing colonial theory. Because of the tendency of sexism within western culture to celebrate men who produce culture, especially in the venues of “high” culture, while sidelining the efforts involved in the everyday aspects of culture that are more often designated to women, such as the labor invested in the production of bringing family together for annual meals and other traditions, I restricted the group of Tlingit people with whom I interviewed¹ to Tlingit women. Though Tlingit traditions may have equally recognized both men's and women's contributions,² since this project is an examination of western, and especially, white, cultural practices I felt that Tlingit women, due to the heightened potential that they experience systemic or overt sexism within western culture,³ have a better chance at identifying the structures of power involved in cultural production, permission and use.⁴

¹I use this form to help convey a, perhaps unattainable, ideal of creating research with a person or group of people instead of the western academic tradition of conducting research “on” people.

²Emily Snyder, Val Napoleon, and John Barrows note that there is a danger in broad statements that deny any possibility of violence against women in Indigenous societies before European incursion in their article “Gender and Violence: Drawing on Indigenous Legal Resources,” forthcoming in a collection edited by Mary Eberts 2013, from the conference “Our Way” held in Saskatoon in 2012.

³Andrea Smith, quoted in an interview conducted by Val Napoleon, states “just because there might not have been sexism in some indigenous societies in 1492 does not mean that we do not have sexism in our societies now. Nor does it mean that we should not deal with the sexism that we now have in our societies.” Val Napoleon, “Aboriginal Discourse: Gender, Identity and Community,” in *Indigenous Peoples and the Law*, eds. Ben Richardson, Shin Imai, and Kent McNeil (Oxford: Hart, 2009), 235.

⁴For the research in her article “A Realist View of Image Politics: Reclamation of the ‘Every Indian,’”

Though not, perhaps, as controversial as focusing on women's voices, it was also important to limit the participation in this thesis to Tlingit people. Since the thesis explores the potential for western colonialism of Tlingit people, and since non-Tlingit people, especially white people, may not realize the extent of the continuous racism enacted against Tlingit people in Sitka, the voices of Tlingit people are clearly the best focus for efficiently examining this topic. While I do not present any examples of racism that do not also involve use of Tlingit culture by non-Tlingit people, much of the content of the conversations I had with the women who agreed to interview with me were about instances, both historical and current, of racism. Inclusion of these narratives would require an entire work equal to or lengthier than this. As such, a background of day-to-day, or “institutional,” racism towards Tlingit people in Sitka is a given in my approach to this topic and must also be accepted by the reader for this work to be useful.

My conversations with these Tlingit women show that, while there is a range of political ideologies on the topic of appropriateness of unauthorized use of Tlingit culture, when the use is seen as inappropriate it is often equated with systems that match those of colonization. Though this project is not equipped to determine a generalized rule for recognizing the appropriateness of any use of Tlingit culture, the finding of this project mandates a need to examine how those non-Tlingit people that use culture benefit from both their use of the culture and from any access to whiteness.

Due to the inability of this work to define a “line in the sand” which demonstrates appropriate use of Tlingit culture, a reader of this thesis will find many uses of the words “perhaps,” “may,” and other hedges. Ultimately, my hope for writing about this topic is simply to expand the conversation on the use of Tlingit culture. The women interviewed, and many other

Nancy Marie Mithlo uses the same technique for the reason that the opinions of Native women “are especially valuable in understanding communal values.” In *[Re]inventing the Wheel: Advancing the Dialogue on Contemporary American Indian Art*, ed. Nancy J. Blomberg (Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2008), 106.

theorists have proposed enough definitions of appropriate use, as well as many solutions to inappropriate use. This project is to involve as many of these discussions as possible in a single work that can promote both the topic of cultural appropriation and highlight Sitkans' and Southeast Alaskans' work in the area.

Cultural appropriation, defined here as the unethical use of the culture of marginalized peoples by people who benefit from the marginalization of those peoples,⁵ is the term of art that describes the process that frames Tlingit culture as available to, and, even, as in need of white use and, through that use, protection. Developed and used in antiracist work in African American culture, culture of Native peoples of the lower forty eight states, and other cultures of people of color in the United States, this thesis asks if this term is applicable in Alaska, and if, as described above, it can be seen as a synonym to colonization. A fair amount of work has been done already on the removal of physical Tlingit cultural pieces, such as totem poles, clan hats, house screens and mortuary items. Though physical cultural objects are hugely important to any group of people and though there is still much work to be done discussing the best methods of returning these items to the land and people from whom they were taken, because of the urgency of addressing all forms of Tlingit culture and because of the relative ease with which non-physical aspects of culture can be transferred this project excludes any discussion of physical Tlingit cultural pieces. Further refining the topic, though I focus on intangible aspects of culture this project is also not an exercise in identifying legally defined intellectual property, a system which quickly becomes subject to conversations of patents, publication dates and lawsuits. Rather, I am interested in the communal discussion of ownership of entire genres and fields of work, including, for example, Tlingit formline design, Tlingit language, Tlingit law, Tlingit philosophy and Tlingit pedagogy.

⁵Joanna Kadi, *Thinking Class* (Boston: South End Press, 1996), 117. This definition is described more completely in chapter three.

Since these topics are so broad and often nebulous, the conversations on specific types of use often lead toward the use of Tlingit identity itself. Though I cite some stances on Tlingit traditions that assign identity and though a significant part of my discussion revolves around different methods of assigning identity, this project presents no definitive identifiers to be used as racial boundaries. As mentioned later on, to do so would continue the long tradition within western academia and by western governments of attempting to quantify blood, cultural knowledge, and even desire as indicators of authenticity.

Continuing on the theme of assigning identities, I use in this project the term Alaska Native to describe generally the many Indigenous peoples who live, wholly or in part, in Alaska. Understanding that there is some overlap, I use the term First Nations peoples to describe the same of those from Canada. Indigenous peoples, a term that has been more recently partially appropriated by anticolonial activists from its dehumanizing association through its use by the eurocentric western anthropological tradition, is nonetheless used, along with the term Native peoples. In all possible cases, a more precise term is used over a generalized term.

The words of Andrea Smith resonate most closely with me when I think about my approach toward the conversations that make this project possible. She states, “I cannot claim the analysis of this book as my own.”⁶ She goes on to cite the education she has received through her interactions with her friends, colleagues, and co-organizers. Though I rely on metaphor theory, feminist theory, critical theory, anti-colonial activism, queer theory, race consciousness, and the patience and skill of the formal teachers of these subjects, my analysis is the result of the inspiring and passionate antioppression work of friends in college, the resistance to dehumanizing corporate structures demonstrated by my co-workers, and the conversations I've had with family, friends and the many other people in Sitka and beyond who have helped me grow.

⁶Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Brooklyn, NY: South End Press, 2005), xi.

Begun in this chapter, the next chapter places my self in relation to this project, the women with whom I interview and the Tlingit and non-Tlingit communities within Sitka. It describes my reliance on previous theory and outlines St. Dennis' community-based participatory research, the theory to which I most closely cleave my research method decisions. Here I provide a brief summary of my actions relating to the research accomplished towards completing this thesis through a discussion of methods, methodology and personal politics.

Chapter three is a synthesis of theory relating to discussions central to the thesis. I begin with examining how well culture can fit into the framework of property and continue with discussions of representation, identity, culture and land. I then focus on Nancy Marie Mithlo's binary of political responses to Native representation by analyzing artistic responses by Alaska Native artists to non-Native involvement in representing Native people. I conclude with a short discussion of the benefits and potential drawbacks of self determining identity. Though I summon help from other workers in later chapters, the discussions here, especially those raised by Edward Said, Andrea Smith and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, are referred to regularly in the subsequent chapters.

Chapters four and five present the bulk of the original research, and alternate between existing theory and the analyses of the women with whom I was able to talk in an effort to expose the differences and similarities between potential cultural appropriation in Southeast Alaska and the cultural appropriation documented in the southern forty eight states. These chapters single out two topics from the conversations. These topics are the occurrences of individuals using culture and organizations using culture. As organizations are made up of, and led by, individuals, and as individuals use culture to present specific aspects of themselves much like organizations do, there are a number of overlaps between the two chapters.

With the chapter on individual use of Tlingit culture by non-Tlingit people, I examine

examples and excerpts of discussions from the recorded interviews interspersed with discussion from previous chapters as well as other theory as a means of comparing and expanding the conclusions presented from those conversations. Tlingit adoption, non-Tlingit behavior while using Tlingit cultural effects, and the importance of identity are key topics in the conversations. I conclude with a discussion of whether Andrea Smith's theory that the use of culture is a screen for access to material resources such as land is applicable in the same ways in Southeast Alaska as it is in the southern forty eight states.

The final chapter of analysis begins with a critique by INCITE!, a collective of women of color thinkers, of non-profit and other corporate-modeled organizations that frame themselves as progressive through their use of images of and claimed proximity to communities of color. This chapter continues with examples of organizations in Sitka that use Tlingit names, logos, personnel, and guests and examines how that use influences the organization's self-representation as Native or multicultural. The examples raised by the women with whom I interviewed especially highlight use of culture by schools and non-profits, but I branch as well into tourism industry and the place names of communities as organizational examples of Tlingit use of culture.

This thesis focuses on a small community, a community in which many people know each other. As such, and because both the politics of race in any community are so infrequently discussed and culture itself is a topic fraught with many layers of political importance, this thesis may expose examples that bring discomfort to the reader, especially those who may identify as white and who, with even the best of intentions, use or have used Native culture. I urge these readers to consider my own involvement in the project: as a white person, this project has required me to use the words and voices of Tlingit people to further my own interests. As stated above, I write from the perspective of one who hopes to strengthen the sovereign power of Tlingit people over their lands, identities and understanding of the world. Despite my own best

intentions, this project may ultimately hinder that final goal. My ultimate lesson from this project may very well be that Tlingit minds best present the solutions to the problems created by Euro-American colonization and racism.

Finally, to those who see themselves in the descriptions of those with whom I interview and wish to work towards a western culture that exoticises Tlingit culture to a lesser extent, I offer Marianna Torgovnick's reassurance that "what has been sought elsewhere may yet be found in the folds and creases of the West's own neglected traditions."⁷

⁷Marianna Torgovnick, *Primitive Passions: Men, Women, and the Quest for Ecstasy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 19.

METHODOLOGY

My project is an examination of beliefs about cultural appropriation of Native cultures at and near Sitka, Alaska, the community in which I grew up. For this project I interviewed seven Tlingit women who had worked at the local domestic violence shelter in Sitka, Alaska. Having, myself, worked at this organization for five years, I know most of these women much better than I would have had I simply asked for voluntary participation from Native women in Sitka. I call these women friends as well as former coworkers. Prior to starting this project I have had, with some of them, numerous conversations with them about the politics of the shelter and how those politics relate to feminism, Tlingit and Native resistance to racism and U.S. colonization. I know through my conversations with them that they have thought a lot about Native sovereignty, women's roles in maintaining their culture as well as survival, and their understanding of art and the production of art as a means to promote sovereignty and resist colonization. From the conversations I recorded with them, I hope to gain a better understanding of whether cultural appropriation of Native cultures in Southeast Alaska exists to the same extent and through similar means as cultural appropriation of the Native American peoples of the contiguous United States.

My reasons for conducting research with these women on their understanding of cultural appropriation in Alaska Native/First Nation communities only make sense, and really, are only ethical, if I first demonstrate a need for the research to be done.

Though, as described below, I ask each woman with whom I interview whether she finds value in pursuing the topic I have chosen, part of the need for this research is based on my understanding of a need to critique racial privilege in my home community. I am particularly interested in conducting research in Sitka because of my desire to live there for a significant part of my life after my completion of my graduate education and because of my knowledge of past practices by the white community in Sitka that do not adequately allow for full Native humanity.

While much academic and non-academic research is the product of a desire to rescue marginalized peoples in distant lands,⁸ a more ethical approach to research places the researcher and those with whom the researcher works in overlapping communities. As such, the researcher will have greater knowledge of the unintended results of their⁹ work and will be able to more easily respond to any negative effects. In this way, academic research can be a part of a greater movement of social justice work enacted by grassroots community activists. By basing this project in the community in which I was raised, I give the results of the project a greater a means to provide a foundation for resistance to further colonization of Native communities in Sitka.

To prepare for this project I searched for work that addressed aspects of the topic of non-Tlingit people using Tlingit culture. While I found no previous work on feminist Native understandings of cultural appropriation of Southeast Alaska Native nations, there are several works that address facets of this topic. Haunani-Kay Trask, a Native Hawaiian activist-scholar, in her article on the Native Hawaiian political sovereignty movement, describes how capitalist colonial economies co-opt Native Hawaiian culture to exoticize the tourist experience for visitors while at the same time creating a false sense of economic opportunities for Hawaiian residents, especially Native Hawaiians.¹⁰ Trask recounts how a Native Hawaiian protest movement was able to create a government system based on Native principles.¹¹ Though the system closely resembled Western parliamentary governments, it nonetheless demonstrates a method of re-appropriating cultural power used to dehumanize Native peoples.

Molly Lee, an anthropologist based in Fairbanks, writes that Native women are expected

⁸Teju Cole, "The White Savior Industrial Complex," *The Atlantic*, 21 March 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/>.

⁹I use this neutrally-gendered pronoun in its unconventional, singular form to avoid the burden of the phrase "she or he" and its inflections.

¹⁰Haunani-Kay Trask, "Native Social Capital: The Case of Hawaiian Sovereignty and Ka Lahui Hawaii," *Policy Sciences* 33 (2000): 383.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 380.

to work within the capitalist system of vending Alaska Native culture to the tourist and local non-Native market, as well as the Native market, while men are more likely to be making the political decisions that affect their colonially-recognized sovereignty in adjacent rooms.¹² Lee also writes of the reliance of Native artists on only rurally available materials to make art, which enhances the exoticization of the art products and thus the saleability of the products, but also increases the difficulties in collecting the materials in rural areas that are being provided a smaller amount of state and federal resources for education, infrastructure and social systems.¹³ Here Lee provides examples of how Native peoples can work within an oppressive capitalist system to effect positive change in their own lives and communities.

Andrea Smith provides theory regarding these two situations, using the strategic framework of the Brooklyn-based organization Sista II Sista, by placing the action of creating safer spaces within hegemonic systems of power as a method of “making power.” Andrea Smith argues that “making power” complements a direct challenge to oppressive systems, or what Sista II Sista calls “taking power.” Both are necessary methods of resource acquisition in a successful movement. For example, if a movement focuses solely on “making power” within social systems it will ultimately not accomplish its goals “by failing to dismantle those structures of oppression that will undermine all our attempts to make power.”¹⁴ Likewise, if a system relies solely on “taking power,” Andrea Smith argues that the harmful systems of oppression will ultimately end up reappearing within the structures of the repossessed power.¹⁵ The conclusion regarding a focus on “making power” is echoed in another article by Andrea Smith on the utility of Western anti-colonial movements for Native sovereignty. Here, Andrea Smith argues that even though

¹²Molly Lee, “How Will I Sew My Baskets?: Women Vendors, Market Art, and Incipient Political Activism in Anchorage, Alaska.” *American Indian Quarterly* 27, nos. 3-4 (2003): 587.

¹³*Ibid.*, 589.

¹⁴Andrea Smith, “Native American Feminism, Sovereignty, and Social Change,” *Feminist Studies* 31, no. 1 (2005): 130.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

Western anti-colonial movements are critical of social and political power differentials, they will not, ultimately, be able to deliver sovereignty because they themselves are based on Western constructs.¹⁶

Andrea Smith would argue that Western anti-colonial liberation responses, such as liberation theology, or, perhaps, Lee's example of Native arts markets that are forced to cater to white and other non-Native tourist markets, must eventually take a temporary back seat to efforts by Native communities to "take power" by operating through their own liberation theologies or art-based economies, respectively. Trasks' use of the creation of a Native Hawaiian national government through street protests and other cultural events that ultimately modeled a Western parliamentary system, though with Native values attached to several of its aspects, is an example of recreating systems of oppression within newly acquired structures of power through a focus on "taking power." Despite this hard line, the framework of making power and taking power can be used to address resistance to cultural appropriation by allowing for Native communities to support Native-created spaces and resources that, while not directly challenging colonialist systems, more closely "model the world that [Native people] are trying to create."¹⁷

Andrea Smith also argues that non-Natives who "selectively and opportunistically" possess knowledge belonging to Native people or about Native people are not, as commonly portrayed, participating in an act of reducing ignorance, but an act of perpetuating "continuing genocide of Native peoples" so as to possess Native land resources.¹⁸ Here, by equating "New Agers claiming to be Indian in a former life" and "Christians adopting Native spiritual forms to further their mission" to more overt acts of physical violence, Andrea Smith is able to complicate

¹⁶Andrea Smith, "Dismantling the Master's Tools with the Master's House: Native Feminist Liberation Theologies," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 22, no. 2 (2006): 88.

¹⁷Andrea Smith, "Native American Feminism," 130.

¹⁸Andrea Smith, "Spiritual Appropriation as Sexual Violence," *Wicazo Sa Review* 20, no. 1 (2005): 98.

the process of ethically organizing anti-colonial activism through education.¹⁹

Molly Lee's analysis focuses on Native women's political agency in a male-dominated environment, but she makes for a false allowance for Native men's oppression in relation to Native women when she argues that women have an easier time adjusting to city life. She states, "when a man moves from a village to the city he forfeits access to, and specialized knowledge of, the hunting and fishing areas he has known all his life."²⁰ Even within the westernized and gendered assumptions of differences in work types between men and women, this statement implies that the knowledge that women have of berry-gathering areas, beaches used for gathering seafoods, and arts materials-gathering areas have less value because they are more easily replaced than men's knowledge.

Andrea Smith further complicates Lee's analysis by stating "many scholars argue that men were disproportionately affected by colonization because the economic systems imposed on Native nations deprived men of their economic roles in the communities more so than women."²¹ To illustrate this thesis Andrea Smith then quotes Paula Gunn Allen stating, "I think that belief is more a reflection of colonial attitudes toward the primacy of male experience than of historical fact. While women still play the traditional role of housekeeper, childbearer, and nurturer, they no longer enjoy the unquestioned positions of power, respect, and decision making on local and international levels that were not so long ago their accustomed functions."²² Andrea Smith also cites Janet McCloud's experience in the 1980s Native rights movement. Through Andrea Smith, McCloud states that Native women activists "were telling me about the different kinds of sexism they were meeting up with in the movement with men,... and a lot of theses women were really

¹⁹Ibid., 100.

²⁰Lee, "How Will I Sew My Baskets?" 587.

²¹Andrea Smith, "Native American Feminism," 122.

²²Ibid.

the backbone of everything, doing a lot of the kind of work that the movement needed.”²³ Andrea Smith's illustration of intersectionality between the oppressions of sexism and colonialism demonstrates the need to focus on Native women's experiences when researching cultural sovereignty and resistance.

Lee Maracle, a Stoh:lo academic and activist from British Columbia, underscores Allen's point of the different amounts of social power Native women currently possess in relation to pre-European invasion time periods in a creation story about women dying for each other after a tsunami to maintain the possibility of perpetuating a community, thus tying their social power to their skill in building community.²⁴ Such skill is still apparent in everyday sacrifices for family and community, Gunn argues through Andrea Smith's statement above, but now, under colonial social institutions, there is no corresponding recognition of the responsibility accorded to Native women.

While Lee's primary focus was on a Native women's experience, her argument for recognition of a special oppression against men was made weaker when it was not backed up with an example from a statement from or action by her informant. Whereas, throughout the rest of her article, she had numerous and richly detailed accounts of Native women's agency and decisions made by Native women in relation to pursuing Native sovereignty, this one point was left without data, leaving the reader to wonder whether the point was made to assuage fears of feminist politics or whether the author's politics were altering the account of a Native woman's political reality.

Andrea Smith and Maracle show us that researchers must place women's responses in the center of the research agenda when those researchers are addressing cultural appropriation in

²³Ibid., 118.

²⁴Lee Maracle, “First Wives Club: Salish Style,” in *Me Sexy: An Exploration of Native Sex and Sexuality*, ed. Drew Hayden Taylor (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2008), 175.

Native communities that are resisting colonization. Also, when analyzing data provided by Native women, inconsistencies in Lee's article demonstrate the need for researchers to use an intersectional understanding provided by both Native studies and feminist studies so as to not provide the reader with a conclusion that potentially diminishes Native women's access to resources.

Theory

Since cultural appropriation is a system of exchange based on the lack of acknowledgement of histories of oppression and privilege on personal human relationships, the effects, if any, of cultural appropriation of Alaska Native culture in Southeast Alaska communities would be most usefully measured through a methodology based on ontologies that incorporate an understanding of social power, constructed identities in relation with essentialized identities, and the importance of history in determining how people are understood in the society in which they participate.

While empiricism has proven very useful in ending social injustice, it is also equally as useful in perpetuating fallacies of human hierarchical categories that have quickly caught the attention of media and government policy-making groups due to their less-than-complicated explanations for social inequalities. Our senses are tools that provide us information that must be socially interpreted, and so, while I believe in the value of empirical evidence, my ontological basis for understanding reality requires me to know the context of the data collection, often including who collected the data and what reasons they had for doing so.

My epistemology, or, to paraphrase Manu Aluli Meyer, my ways of knowing what I know,²⁵ relies strongly on an allowance for myself and others to choose identities that allow us to

²⁵Manu Aluli Meyer, "Acultural Assumptions of Empiricism: a Native Hawaiian Critique," *Canadian*

operate most closely to the reality that we experience, based on our own cultures, histories and contexts. My epistemological understanding of identities relies on my ontological belief that our society constructs categories, often in binaries, in which to exist. Understanding the history of how these identities are created by society and identifying who most benefits from the existence of these socially constructed categories helps us challenge, change or remove dehumanizing narratives that are historically built into some identities. Reflected in this epistemology is the second-wave feminist theoretical understanding that the personal is the political, as, to provide the most inclusive study of the benefits of particular socially constructed identities, I must look not only at overt political power, but also the benefits of more easy social acceptance in public spaces and the benefits of freedom from domestic labor.²⁶

Based on my ontology and epistemology, my methodology must be able to address the complications and intricacies of relationships between friends. Wilson writes that an Indigenous paradigm might find “strategies of inquiry” that involve making “relationship building and relational accountability” more accessible.²⁷ Because of these constraints, I chose the interview methodology through which to conduct my research. Though the interview process is a widely used western methodology,²⁸ it allows for Wilson's relational accountability to a greater extent

Journal of Native Education 25, no. 2 (2001): 191.

²⁶Though Alice Echols, in her review of Christine Stansell's *The Feminist Promise: 1792 to the Present*, argues that “the notion that the ‘personal is political’ owes a lot to the radical sociologist C. Wright Mills and the New Leftist Tom Hayden, who popularized Mill's insight,” the phrase is best known through Carol Hanisch's essay. Alice Echols, “Feminist Mothers and Daughters,” *Women's Review of Books* 27, no. 5 (1 September 2010): 8; Carol Hanisch, “The Personal is Political,” originally published in *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation* (1970), available online at <http://carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html>.

²⁷Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, (Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 39.

²⁸David Silverman, “Analyzing Talk and Text,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed., eds. Norman K. Denzin, & Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000), 822; Charles L. Briggs, *Learning How to Ask: A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Role of the Interview in Social Science Research* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1-2.

than observational qualitative methodologies or quantitative methodologies.²⁹

The weakness of the interview, however, lies in precisely its western construction. As Andrea Smith has pointed out, ultimately, western anti-colonial movements will not result in a complete removal of hegemonic restrictions from colonized communities. Cultures that do not participate in an “interview society,” or cultures that may participate in interviewing but have been marginalized by Western society in part through the interview process must use their Indigenous methodologies to achieve complete liberation. Briggs notes this in part by stating that “some potential respondents are drawn from communities whose sociolinguistic norms stand in opposition to those embedded in the interview,” and “the farther we move away from home, culturally and linguistically, the greater the problem.”³⁰ In citing culture and “sociolinguistic norms”, Briggs would like us to see that without common references in an interview, the data resulting from an interview must have less meaning to the researcher, and, after analysis and publication by the researcher, must also have less value to the person interviewed as well. So, not only is it less ethical to interview outside of our own cultures, but the researcher, as an outsider, will be less likely to be sure about the quality of data that they receive.

Echoing the importance of the position of the researcher in relation to the people subject to the research, Verna St. Denis, in her report on community-based participatory research, states, “research is not inherently bad. It is those who pay for it, conduct it and decide what ‘good’ research is” who have used it to harm marginalized communities.³¹ St. Denis, then, urges us to look at who controls the funding for research and the history behind such funding to understand the weaknesses and strengths involved in resisting or colluding with the research industrial

²⁹Andrea Fontana and James H. Frey, “From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed., eds. Norman K. Denzin, & Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000), 658.

³⁰Briggs, *Learning How to Ask*, 3.

³¹Verna St. Denis, “Community-Based Participatory Research: Aspects of the Concept Relevant Practice,” *Native Studies Review* 8, no. 2 (1992): 52.

complex by participating in interview-based research.

Despite Briggs' critique, government funding, and other funding sources, have increasingly preferred quantitative work.³² Lareau and Walters' work on school performance research notes that quantitative research is currently being privileged over qualitative research. In the case of education research, the federal government both limits funding to start qualitative research and gives diminished attention to results, when and if they are available.³³

The reason for this, as stated by Briggs, is that interviewing, a major component of qualitative research, is seen as inherently subject to bias. Because of the very relationship established to convey information between the researcher and those the researcher is working with in an interview, the information must be viewed as more strongly influenced by the desires and politics of the person conducting the research.³⁴ This is not to say that quantitative data is not also influenced by researcher bias. Part of the argument for the inclusion of qualitative data in any research is that all studies will contain some bias as all studies must be created by a researcher and interacted with by people providing data.

Briggs confronts the accusation of bias by framing the argument of bias as one relating to identities. He states, "the assumption here is that if you could strip the interview situation of all these factors [of age, race, gender, etc.], the 'real' or 'true' or 'unbiased' response would emerge."³⁵ Briggs states that this assumes that a truth can exist outside of our perceptions of fact, and that, by accounting for all biases, the researcher can then achieve complete understanding of the data a

³²Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln, "Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. Norman K. Denzin, & Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), 105-106, 116; Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 2.

³³Annette Lareau and Pamela Barnhouse Walters, "What Counts as Credible Research?" *Teachers College Record* (1 March 2010): 2.

³⁴Briggs, *Learning How to Ask*, 21.

³⁵*Ibid.*

person provides.³⁶ This ideology results from the Enlightenment period, when philosophies places trust in the power of science itself to always provide positive results for society.³⁷ Science often did produce beneficial results, but often only for societies with recognized scientists. Based on a monopoly on the ability to name who a scientist was and what science was, this left western cultures with the benefits of research as well as a hegemonic colonial power over non-western cultures.

Having a critique of positivistic stances is useful when understanding the strengths of interviewing, but bias still exists and practitioners of interviewing should be careful not to claim complete objectivity. Still, because of the doubts of the validity and reliability of qualitative data, and because of potential damage from bias, there is little funding for qualitative research and a reduced desire to rely on studies that use only qualitative data. Since interviewing, even without the added obligations of a systemic process of checking in with those interviewed throughout the research and analytical processes as described in the discussion of community-based participatory research methodologies below, is a time-consuming and labor-intensive process,³⁸ this can additionally limit the amount of research that can be accomplished or can require greater, perhaps inaccessible, amounts of resources. However, the benefits of a research method that fits the type of questions that are being pursued more than make up for this drawback.

These benefits are apparent in the positive outcome of the construction of relationships between researchers and those providing information. Fontana and Frey see the relationship between a researcher and the people with whom a researcher works as a statement that there is more of an understanding between participants. That the researcher and people researched understand each other, though, does not mean that they agree with each other's views. Fontana

³⁶Ibid., 22.

³⁷Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 22.

³⁸Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods*, 71.

and Frey state that the conflicts resulting from these disagreements can lead to “very rewarding” results in the hands of an experienced researcher.³⁹ These disagreements will not only demonstrate to the reader of a study a better idea of the position of the person providing data, but will reassure the reader that the researcher also has a bias and that it is, at least partially, being accounted for in the results of the study.

St. Denis describes this situation in her work on community-based participatory research, a methodology that very often requires interview work. St. Denis focuses on the disagreements between not only the researcher and the people providing data (in the case of community-based participatory research, these people are “co-researchers”), but also between those providing data. She describes the process as “messy,”⁴⁰ but suggests that it is because of this messy process that a high quality product can result. Agreeing with the higher quality product that results from disagreements and their resulting messiness, Audre Lorde, commenting on the difficulty of addressing racism and heterosexism within the feminist movement, states that “within the interdependence of mutual (nondominant) differences lies that security which enables us to descend into the chaos of knowledge and return with the true visions of our future.”⁴¹ Though Lorde uses the terms “chaos” instead of “messiness,” “difference” instead of “disagreements,” and “true visions of our future” instead of higher quality research results, her observation lends itself nicely to St. Denis' comments on the value of accepting difficult social occurrences within the research process.

Though calling Lorde too “organic”⁴² in her epistemological approach, Donna Haraway

³⁹Fontana and Frey, “From Structured Questions,” 666.

⁴⁰Here St. Denis is following a discussion by L. Dave Brown and Robert E. Kaplan, “Participative Research in a Factory,” in *Human Inquiry: A Sourcebook of New Paradigm Research*, eds. Peter Reason and John Rowan (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons), 311.

⁴¹Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (Berkley, CA: The Crossing Press, 1984), 111-12.

⁴²Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 174. By making this critique, Haraway demonstrates her support for a more objective approach to research. See also Haraway, 191-193.

also advocates for a type of action through mess. She argues for a “cyborg politics” that “is the struggle for language and the struggle against perfect communication, against the one code that translates all meaning perfectly, the central dogma of phallogocentrism.”⁴³ She builds on the image of mess by stating “cyborg politics insist on noise and advocate pollution, rejoicing in the illegitimate fusions of animal and machine.”⁴⁴ Haraway's cyborgs are her vision for a future without a reliance on an innocent human beginning. Without this presumed innocence, she is free to develop methods of interaction that can better track the flow of contaminants over boundaries of identity. This ability is crucial to researchers who are interested in how they situate themselves relative to others who are involved in their research.

Colin Bell and S. Encel are perhaps the first to use the term “messy” to praise the qualitative research methods. They note that, while such practices are hidden in the production of social science method “cookbooks,” the resulting practice “is infinitely more complex, messy, various and much more interesting.”⁴⁵ They conclude that the political context of research is often hidden by the “prescriptive, normative” methodology texts and that, because of this, social science research should “reflect social and political concerns *first* and techniques only later, if at all.”⁴⁶ Since the political concerns of the researcher inform not only the intent behind the study but also inform the decisions a researcher makes when conducting a study, relating the political history of a project likely will inform a reader of the methodology just as well as a list of actions.

Brown and Kaplan cite participatory research as a “social process” and conclude their study with a note from one of their participants, who states “the participative research process

⁴³Ibid., 176.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Colin Bell and S. Encel, *Inside the Whale: Ten Personal Accounts of Social Research* (Rushcutters Bay, Australia: Pergamon Press, 1978), 4.

⁴⁶Ibid., 4-5 (emphasis in the original).

produces irreversible changes in the people who are most closely involved with the program.”⁴⁷ St. Denis, by way of describing messiness in community-based participatory research, further states that these changes affect not only participants but also researchers. She warns us that “it is possible—even likely—that the researcher will alter the reality it seeks to explore.”⁴⁸ A researcher altering the reality, and thus the data, on which a study is based certainly creates a mess when compared to the theoretical ideal of objective science. Since the project I present here is about non-Native people using Native culture and is the product of myself, a non-Native person, analyzing conversations I have with Native people, my interaction is itself an example of the research topic I wish to pursue and thus has the “possible—even likely—” chance of influencing the direction of the conversations that make up the data. St. Denis' description of community-based participatory research, then, is useful in considering my own involvement in this project.

Though qualitative research brings fundamental complications to the theory of pure research and knowledge, it is also better able to handle the “messiness” that is inherent in the research process. Valerie Janesick compares qualitative research to presenting ideas through dance. She writes that “qualitative research design has an elastic quality, much like the elasticity of a dancer's spine. Just as dance mirrors and adapts to life, qualitative research is adapted, changed, and redesigned as the study proceeds.”⁴⁹ By being able to adapt to new situations that arise during the research process, the research has the potential to gain nuance that would not be possible in more rigid, formulaic research structures.

Finally, related to the positivist critique of interviews, the existence of the hierarchy

⁴⁷Brown and Kaplan, “Participative Research,” 314.

⁴⁸St. Denis, “Community-Based Participatory Research,” 62.

⁴⁹Valerie J. Janesick, “The Dance of Qualitative Research Design: Metaphor, Methodolatry, and Meaning,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. Norman K. Denzin, & Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), 218.

within the structure of the interview methodology must be addressed. In an interview, the researcher, as a researcher, always has some degree of power greater than those from whom they gain data. This is the case even if the researcher also is a producer of data and even if the other people providing data are called and act as “co-researchers,” simply through the fact that the researcher is the one that is catalyzing a situation that creates a product. Fontana and Frey show discrepancy in power by adjusting the perception of the interview by stating “what seems to be a conversation is really a one-way psuedoconversation.”⁵⁰ Briggs states that the interviewer is ultimately given control through the ability to acknowledge “correct” answers by moving on to another question or to challenge the adequacy of an answer by asking for more detail.⁵¹

Here, a positivist would understand a hierarchy as an absolute given when gaining access to information. The researcher would need to have absolute power over the process, the questions, the analysis and the results for there to exist meaningful information in the final product.

Nevertheless, there can be much more power given to people who provide data in the interview process. This can be done through a preview of the report before publishing along with the power to “veto” any or all work related to the person who provided the data, the opportunity for data providers to adjust the direction of the interview or to even create the central research question, as well as to suggest to the researcher people with whom a researcher may consult to discuss the project. Community-based participatory research attempts to remove as much power as possible from the researcher and delivering it to the people the researcher approaches to participate in research. Despite this, a hierarchy persists, and this power can result in research that harms the research participants.

Ann Oakley also points out the problematic nature of hierarchy within the formal

⁵⁰Fontana and Frey, “From Structured Questions,” 658.

⁵¹Briggs, *Learning How to Ask*, 56.

interview⁵² as a part of her argument that part of this power is a result of the history of sociological research that has formed the interview into a “masculine paradigm.”⁵³ She bases her argument on the use of the interview to interrogate those demonstrating the stereotypically feminine characteristic of exhibiting excessive emotion as a method of rationalizing interview-based responses into frameworks that fit logically into the rest of the known information. Who controls the interview, then, and what other information they possess, has been key to how interviews have been traditionally carried out.

Oakley also states that a method to reduce the hierarchical nature of the interview is to practice the research method of conducting multiple interviews with each person being interviewed.⁵⁴ With this practice in place, the interview process itself becomes more structured on a continued relationship between the two people within the interview. Oakley notes, “common sense would suggest that an ethic of detachment on the interviewer's part is much easier to maintain where there is only one meeting with the interviewee.”⁵⁵ Oakley also notes that multiple meetings for interviews gives the person with whom the interviewer is interviewing a chance to gather data from the interviewer, either about the subject, the research process, or the reasons the interviewer is conducting the research. These opportunities disrupt the power inscribed into the formal interview process by allowing those who are interviewed to conduct their own research on the researcher and perhaps take more risks in the information that they decide to share if their findings show that the information shared might prove to produce favorable results.

Whether seen as a weakness or a strength, the hierarchical relationship between the

⁵²Ann Oakley, “Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms,” in *Doing Feminist Research*, ed. Helen Roberts (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 37.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 31.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 44-46.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 44.

interviewer and the interviewee will always exist. In comparison with more quantitative methodologies, though, the interview allows for much more flexibility in the distribution of decision-making power of the research process.

The data of an interview results in a visual (written), aural, or aural and visual (taped) record of talking.⁵⁶ In addition to this there are four non-verbal data sets available to be collected at an interview. Fontana and Frey, citing Gordon, call these data the proxemic, chronemic, kinesic and paralinguistic, referring to the use of space between talking people, the use of timing of statements, the use of body movement while speaking and variations in vocal sound while talking.⁵⁷ These latter data can completely change the meaning of the words spoken during an interview. Though they hold valuable information, unless the interviewer is able to both conduct an interview and record aspects of the non-verbal data, these sets of data are lost in transcripts, and some of this data is often lost in audio recordings.

Silverman states that the act of transcribing the taped data into written data is itself a valuable research opportunity. Creating transcriptions involves “close, repeated listenings to recordings that often reveal previously unnoted recurring features of the organization of talk.”⁵⁸ This required repetition, then, can be seen as strength of the interview methodology, though a strength that comes at the cost of much time spent reviewing data.

Implementation

To prepare for the interviewing process, I conducted a pilot study with a friend enrolled as a student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. This study allowed me to test questions, challenge preconceived notions about possible responses, practice using the recording equipment,

⁵⁶Silverman, “Analyzing Talk and Text,” 821.

⁵⁷Fontana and Frey, “From Structured Questions,” 660-61.

⁵⁸Silverman, “Analyzing Talk and Text,” 830.

and explore the usefulness and difficulty of the transcription process. I found that interviewing was both exhausting and rewarding in that it took a huge amount of energy to direct a conversation as well as to let topics within a conversation lead themselves, and that transcribing was extraordinarily labor intensive and required much time.

Before interviewing with the people I had in mind for this project, I applied for and received⁵⁹ permission from the University of Alaska Fairbanks' Institutional Review Board to involve living people in the project. Through this process, I developed the release form describing the conditions to which the women who decided to interview with me would agree.⁶⁰ In accordance with the release, I attempt to maintain anonymity for any of the women with whom I interviewed who request it. Similarly, I am pleased to list the women who request that their names be attached to this work. Their names can be found under the acknowledgement section. Since Sitka is a community that is small enough that a small number of clues could lead to the breaking of the confidentiality of a person's identity who requests anonymity, I have not attached names to any quotations used in this thesis. To decrease the likelihood that details accumulated between quotes compromise a person's confidentiality, I have also declined to use pseudonyms. This “safety in numbers” approach will assist in helping maintain the anonymity of the women who asked to remain anonymous.

In my interviews I relied on some aspects of Wilson's relational accountability and St. Denis' community-based participatory research. I also relied on Oakley's position on the importance of interviewing people repeatedly. As noted above, most of the seven women with whom I interviewed were friends of mine. By choosing to interview people with whom I have a personal relationship, I increased the chance that the data of the interview will be understood correctly and that necessary follow-up conversations will occur. Also, the presence of a

⁵⁹See appendices A and B.

⁶⁰See appendix C.

relationship prior to the relationship built in the interview process can help allow the person with whom the research takes place to approach the researcher with requests for confidentiality, omission of material and other research ethics issues. Of the perhaps fifteen Tlingit women who had ever worked at Sitkans Against Family Violence for more than half a year at the beginning of this project,⁶¹ I had come to know ten during my time working or volunteering there. Of these ten women, eight were still alive and still in Sitka. Of these eight people, seven agreed to have our conversations recorded on the topic of non-Tlingit use of Tlingit culture as the central part of the research needed to prepare a thesis to complete the master's degree program that I pursue. Although I asked about other people to interview and received names of several people who were not shelter workers, I decided to limit my interview population solely to those who worked at the shelter.

I began each interview introducing myself, my proposed topic, my the reasons for my interest in the topic and my objective of completing a masters degree with the material from the interviews. I also described the research methodology I planned to use. Though I had previously made it clear that I was asking them to participate because of my own interest in the topic and because of my own desire to conduct the research through an interview-based method, to be in line with St. Denis' community-based participatory research standards, my first objective in each interview was to to see whether each person considered the research topic useful or worth her time. I asked this question in the first interview with each person with whom I interviewed. I also asked if there were other topics that I should be focusing on, as well as if there were questions on the topic I presented that I had missed. Despite this introduction and semistructured style several women mentioned that they were nervous about being interviewed at the start of the interview.

⁶¹Based on email correspondence with SAFV executive director Vicki D'Amico, 15 January 2014.

Every woman with whom I recorded a conversation stated that the topic that I planned to pursue was useful, relevant, and needed. The strongest critique of my methodology was that several women thought that I should not limit the people with whom I asked to interview to women.

My interview locations varied. They included my own home, the homes of the women, outdoor meetings, the conference room at the domestic violence shelter, and conference rooms at other worksites, depending on the comfort of each person. These locations were often very informal and included various interruptions. For recompense for each woman's time and energy spent discussing these often difficult topics, I paid each woman \$50. I tried to keep interviews within an hour and, if they happened to go overtime, I offered time for a break from conversation. Finally, in hopes of more closely following ethical research standards, I will provide each participant with a copy of the final product.

The central questions I had for the interview were, "what examples of non-Tlingit use of Tlingit culture come to mind?" To initiate conversation about the more abstract uses of Tlingit culture, I would sometimes use examples of more familiar commercialized uses of Tlingit culture, such as the plastic totem poles sold in retail to the tourist market, or the napkin designs Alaska Airlines was currently. For each example of non-Tlingit use of Tlingit culture I asked how comfortable that person felt with how that use was exercised. As a follow up to the second question I asked each woman if she saw the non-commercial use of Tlingit culture by non-Tlingit people as similar to the colonial non-Tlingit use of Tlingit land. In addition to this, I asked each woman demographic questions relating to race, clan, gender, and affiliation with the terms "artist" and "feminist." Though the interview consent form stated that I would ask participants to write an evaluation of the interviews, I found that evaluating was more easily conducted as part of the interview towards the end.

Often, similar examples would arise from different women. Though this is not especially surprising in a small community, the occurrence of different women relating the same narrative shows that the number of interviews that I conducted approximately encompassed the entirety of the topic that the women felt comfortable relating in our conversations.

From each interview I created a complete transcription. This process, as noted above by Silverman and through my experience in my pilot study, was time consuming as well as an excellent opportunity to review my interview behavior for future modification. It also allowed me, if I was able to schedule in subsequent interviews with the same person, to formulate questions to further explore topics that had been raised but were not described completely or were stories that I was not able to understand. Despite my notation above to the importance Fonatana and Frey place on non-verbal cues that take place within the interview, I was not able to record these notes. I instead found that excusing myself from the conversation to write notes decreased the urgency I was able to convey to the person with whom I was interviewing regarding the importance of the thoughts and ideas they were verbalizing.

Within the process of interviewing and analysis, I maintained contact with each woman as best as I could. I delivered to each of them complete transcripts of their interviews, as well as a flash drive with the audio recordings of their interviews. By doing this I physically returned the data that each woman had provided to that person. As a part of the process of basing the research in the community from which it came, I provided an additional transcript with a red pen and a stamped, addressed envelope with instructions⁶² to review the interview and remove, change, or note any parts that needed alteration. Later, after the bulk of the analysis had been completed, I met up with five of the seven women and reviewed the quotations used in the thesis as well as the analysis attached to each quote. One of the two women with whom I was not able to meet had

⁶²See appendix D.

left town but had reviewed the printed transcript I had provided earlier. This process was extremely valuable in that it allowed me to correct misreadings of the interviews as well as allowed the women with whom I interviewed to see the manner in which I used their words and narratives.

Interviews began after receiving Institutional Review Board permission in November 2011. I conducted five interviews with four women from December 2011 through January 2012. During the summer I conducted twelve more interviews with those first four women and three other women. By December 2012 I had prepared and delivered the transcripts of the interviews and by September 2013 I had composed the bulk of my analysis. I spent the fall of 2013 reviewing the analysis with the women interviewed.

In accordance with Verna St. Denis' critique of the tendency of western research to remove information from Indigenous communities, I presented part of the thesis findings to the 2013 Tlingit Clan Conference in Juneau. I plan to present in Sitka as well. If they will accept them, I will give the Sitka public library and the Sitka Tribe of Alaska library copies of the thesis.

My analysis is primarily a comparison between a close reading of topical content from the interviews and relevant feminist, anticolonial and critical race theory. I occasionally use metaphor theory⁶³ to further examine examples of use. For each chapter that uses interview transcriptions, I made a rough outline of different occurrences of non-Tlingit use of culture. From this outline, I focused on the examples of non-Tlingit use of Tlingit culture that were most relevant to the topic. I then compared similar theory to the theory and narrative presented in the conversations to see how closely they fit.

⁶³George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); and Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING THEORY

How is Native culture viewed?

Bagele Chilisa cites James M. Blaut's identification of an “inside/outside” relationship that the western world has with the non-western world. Chilisa states that “Westerners” then, “propagated the myth that those living in the colonies-to-be lacked intellectual creativity, spiritual values, and rationality.”⁶⁴ Once this myth is established, colonizers can rationalize their status as people who take resources from others through force. To establish such a dehumanizing myth western societies must establish a certain control over the act of viewing non-western peoples as a means to remove the humanity of non-western peoples. To understand how Native culture is viewed in such a way, I must first define culture and then examine how western culture structures the act of viewing.

I define culture as a set of social expectations that are both pervasive throughout a society and have a history within that society. As part of having a history, these expectations can be described through narrative to show that, despite being ubiquitous, they still can and must change to address new cultural input. Though many examples related in this project correspond better to structures of identity, I focus here, first, on theories relating to art due to the power inherent in art to frame ourselves and others. In the western tradition art is often divided into the categories of theater, literature, visual arts, dance and music.⁶⁵ While these categories are often conflated when art is being produced, the categories maintain their separate identity. An example of this is the case of a theater production, where the acting can rely on interaction with the visual art of the scenery of a stage, the dance-based movement around the stage, the pitch and rhythm of the spoken word (as well as potential musical numbers), and, of course, the written text of the piece

⁶⁴Bagele Chilisa, *Indigenous Research Methodologies* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2012), 56.

⁶⁵To see how this relates to Alaska Native education, see Maria Shaa Tlaá Williams, “Indigenous Research: Growing Our Own Research Paradigms,” Alaska Native Studies Conference, Juneau, AK, 15 March 2014.

itself, and yet the primary credit given in the program is to the director of the play as an acknowledgement of their theater-based skill. Even the more “pure” western categories of art rely on the other arts to complete their presentation. Visual art and music may seem like a stand-alone categories until one examines how artists working in those fields may use theatrical concepts to influence how a viewer interacts with the pieces in a gallery or how, in an orchestral performance, the conductor and the soloist are not uncommonly both moving in such a way as to cause one to wonder whose choreography is being presented as an interpretation to the music.

An examination of how western society defines culture and art is important in a discussion of Native culture as an example of both how categories exist in western culture that could exert hegemonic control over how western audiences view Native culture and art, as well as how people resisting that control can deconstruct those categories to examine what power exists that enforces them within western culture. In her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes, paraphrasing Stuart Hall, that the west, as a concept, allows “‘us’ to characterize and classify societies into categories, condense complex images of other societies through a system of representation, provide a standard model of comparison, and provide criteria of evaluation against which other societies can be ranked.”⁶⁶ The categorization of culture within western society is an example of one of the many standards to which non-western societies can be compared and ranked. This ability to compare non-western culture within western cultural categories allows western scholars to appear, in western society, more objective in their scholarship because they rely on a structure that western society accepts.

Art historian Lucy Lippard states that “the oral tradition that nurtures the Native and African American cultures is not sharply separated from music and dance.”⁶⁷ By using the

⁶⁶Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 42.

⁶⁷Lucy Lippard, *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 101.

example of oral tradition, which is a mix of the western art forms of theater and literature, Lippard provides an example of how non-western Indigenous culture does not easily fit into western categories. This ability of non-western culture to exist beyond the confines of a categorized western understanding of culture is part of the basis of western fear of Indigenous culture and the Indigenous peoples that create such forms. This fear then provides a motive for the need western society has historically shown to view Native peoples as less than human and Native actions, Native land and Native objects valuable unless controlled by western agents. Lippard relates this fear by providing an example of how white people fear the African American tradition of funk. One of her examples is that a lyric of funk is to “let your body talk.” This statement contradicts western understandings of art categories, as, in western tradition, only people, or, if one must speak corporally, mouths, talk. To conflate dancing and speaking incites a fear of disorder, while, in funk culture, “the hybrid represents the ideal.”⁶⁸

Having defined culture and discussed aspects of western understanding of art as a part of culture, I should now be better able to examine how Native culture is viewed. Since the question of how Native culture is viewed is presented in the passive voice, I must give context to the question by identifying who is doing the viewing. This will make any conclusions that the question provokes more meaningful. In support of this, Linda Tuhiwai Smith quotes Edward Said as asking “Who writes? For whom is the writing being done? In what circumstances? These it seems to me are the questions whose answers provide us with the ingredients making a politics of interpretation.”⁶⁹ Discovering the political background of an interpreter by revealing the identity of that interpreter allows a researcher to utilize a critique that addresses social power.

Combining Lippard's discussion of hybridity with Said's questioning of the circumstances of writing, Donna Haraway argues in support of a mixed approach of objectivity and relativity to

⁶⁸Ibid., 71.

⁶⁹Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 37.

research through vision, stating “positioning implies responsibility for our enabling practices. It follows that politics and ethics ground struggles for the contests over what may count as rational knowledge.”⁷⁰ She continues with similar questions to Said's, asking, “How to see? Where to see from?... Who interprets the visual field? What other sensory powers do we wish to cultivate besides vision?”⁷¹

Since much of the work done on viewing Native culture has been done by western scholars, it makes sense to turn the tables and examine western scholars in the act of viewing. Thus, I will focus on how Native culture is viewed by non-Native, or western society using primarily the work of Indigenous scholars who have analyzed the vast amount of material these western scholars have produced. I would also like to focus on how Native culture is viewed in terms of gender, both in terms of how the culture itself is gendered by western society and in terms of how men have categorized and valued Native culture differently than women and non-gender conforming people.

Summaries of how western culture has presented Native culture in western contexts provide a place to begin our examination of the western perspective of Native culture. Edward Said, writing in the tradition of western intellectualism as a non-westerner who was educated through western institutions, emphasizes the importance of focusing on a narrative presence in critiques of productions representing any culture as a way of ensuring that the society being presented is viewed as being continuously active in achieving human potential. He states, “The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them.”⁷²

According to Said, then, a nation of people that oppresses another nation through the means of

⁷⁰Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*, 193.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 194.

⁷²Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), xiii.

imperialism does so by effectively removing the narratives available to the that nation. A nation with limited access of control of their own narratives is more easily managed by an imperializing nation because the identity of those experiencing imperialism can be transformed through the replacement of origin narratives. In addition, the replacement of an origin narrative is supported by systematically creating narratives that refer to the current expressions of the nation experiencing imperialism that do not allow for a fully human modern experience. Thus both the origin narratives as well as the contemporary history of a society are shaped by colonial viewing. This control of the narrative by imperial power exists both epistemologically through a practice of viewing Indigenous culture as well as ontologically through the mainstream western understanding of how Indigenous culture can exist.

The concept of essentialism is supported when the narrative of a culture is removed.⁷³ An essence can be defined as a core theoretical state of being that creates a particular identity for a person such that it differentiates that person from certain others while connecting that person to another group of people. Smith describes an essence as something that is “fundamentally, undeniably different.”⁷⁴ And, though Said refers to authenticity as a “synchronic essentialism,”⁷⁵ suggesting that are types of essentialism that can exist within a tradition of narrative-based identity, in his later book he states that “if you know in advance that the African or Iranian or Chinese or Jewish or German experience is fundamentally integral, coherent, separate, and therefore comprehensible only to Africans, Iranians, Chinese, Jews, or Germans, you ... posit as essential something which, I believe, is ... historically created and the result of interpretation.”⁷⁶ This describes essentialism in opposition to a constructed, historical, or narrative-based, identity. Said's later reference allows for the reader to understand essentialism as dangerous because of its

⁷³Ibid., 31-32.

⁷⁴Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 73.

⁷⁵Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 240.

⁷⁶Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 31-32.

dismissal of time as a tool to critique social power. Although, as Smith describes, essentialism has been used by social justice groups as a method of organizing around identity, it ultimately does not allow for an easier understanding of the already, for many, difficult understanding of intersectionality of identities or, as Said points out above, the ability of a group to adjust to new cultural circumstances.

The process of replacing and modifying narratives, when applied to the relationship between the west, consisting of Europe and the United States, and the Orient, is what Said describes as Orientalism. While Said's original Orient did not include the Indigenous peoples of the Americas⁷⁷ there are many Indigenous cultures within Said's Orient.⁷⁸ Moreover, his focus when describing the power relations between western culture and the Orient is entirely on Indigenous peoples within the Orient. Because of this, his analysis can work equally well when describing the colonial and imperial relationship the United States has with Native nations within its borders as it does for the imperial relationship between Asia and the United States or Europe. In his later book, *Culture and Imperialism*, Said expands his focus beyond his original Orient, including white populations resisting colonial control in Ireland.

Said bases his argument of the influence that Orientalism has had on Indigenous nations and on Europe on the history of production of literature and other art forms that Europe has created when viewing the Orient as well as on the style maintained within those art forms when they express representations of non-western peoples. Said describes the development of Orientalism within the west throughout its history. This not only gives license to western academics to realize their place in a changing field, but gives weight to the importance of Said's topic itself. His focus on style allows him to understand how Indigenous Oriental cultures are

⁷⁷Said, *Orientalism*, 1-2.

⁷⁸Andrea Smith, "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy: Rethinking Women of Color Organizing," in *The Color of Violence*, ed. INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2006), 68.

being represented. He states, though, that his “whole point about this system [of representation] is not that it is a misrepresentation of some Oriental essence—in which I do not for a moment believe—but that it operates as representations usually do, for a purpose, according to a tendency, in a specific historical, intellectual, and even economic setting.”⁷⁹ His motive, then, is not to find a correct representation so much as to examine the politics behind how the Orientalist representations are made. Said's focus on the setting in which representations occur may be used to examine western representations of Indigenous peoples in an effort to understand the politics of the people doing the representing. The politics, the “specific historical, intellectual and ... economic” influences of the people doing the representing will then give us a better idea of how those people view Native culture.

Finding politics within representations is possible because no representation is absolute. Said addresses this by asking “whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything, or whether any and all representations, because they *are* representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambiance of the representer.”⁸⁰ Representations are not reproductions. They are interpretations that are influenced by the understanding of the person representing. Whether or not the person doing the representing is aware of their own understanding of an experience, in addition to whether they act on that awareness, then, are the measurements that must be made to reveal the politics of a person who represents Native culture.

Because representation is not some innate process within a person representing that results in a reproduction of an original, the process of representation can be connected to the process of viewing. A person representing must first view the subject which will be represented. This viewing grants authority to their representation as a product. The authority granted by the

⁷⁹Said, *Orientalism*, 273.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 272 (emphasis in the original).

process of creating a representation through viewing then, in turn, engenders a greater response within the society to which the person representing belongs. This response results in a greater number of people who will view the representation itself as well as a greater number of people gaining interest in viewing the original source of the representation. In this sense, the process of representation very closely matches, if not entirely recreates, the process of cultural production.⁸¹

Said states that “all cultures tend to make representations of foreign cultures the better to master or in some way control them. Yet not all cultures make representations of foreign cultures and in fact master or control them.”⁸² Said attributes this difference to European essentialist understandings of the European position as colonizers, “proclaiming that Europeans should rule, [and] non-Europeans be ruled.”⁸³ This cultural positioning, then, is enough, when combined with a systemic and pervasive cultural apparatus that constantly updates that cultural position, to lead to extensive global control of physical and cultural resources. This cultural apparatus additionally shifts the understanding of the resulting difference in possessed resources from the apparatus itself to a narrative that understands non-western peoples as lacking human potential.

To make up for this perceived deficiency in humanity, academics and others within western society then can feel impelled to act on behalf of Indigenous societies by preserving their culture in a complex and vast “archive,”⁸⁴ “reservoir,”⁸⁵ or “library”⁸⁶ within the institution of western academic intellect while at the same time exporting western culture to make up for whatever perceived deficiencies western critiques develop of the examined culture. Thus Orientalism allows for the western economic entities to export cultural goods, often at a profit, while importing non-western culture that is controlled and shaped by western views to market to

⁸¹Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 56.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 100.

⁸³*Ibid.*

⁸⁴Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 42-3.

⁸⁵Said, *Orientalism*, 39.

⁸⁶Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 67.

western consumers.

When the process of representation is combined with a hegemonic power controlled by those people who are representing over those being represented, the tendency of the people representing is to limit their view of the subject being represented in such a way as to mimic the previous representations created by the original people who viewed and represented that culture or group of people. Said shows us that there are positions from which a person can view culture that allow the viewer to place themselves outside another culture. This outsideness grants further authority to representations that are viewed by cultures that value objectivism and positivism. Smith writes that, within the western social science community, there is an assumption that an “objective, value-free” scientific process is expected by researchers.⁸⁷ She cites western traditions of critical theory and feminist theory as recently challenging these expectations. By inserting self-awareness and a personal-as-political framework into the research process, the representations that researchers create will tend to objectify those they study to a lesser extent.

Feminist theory frequently encourages the use of examining one's own political identity while creating research, whether the research is on one's own community or on another group of people. However, white feminist research on the gendering of western culture often relies on an othered understanding of Native culture in an effort to better understand its position within western society. Lippard cites a 1972 example of the feminist Sherry Ortner asking “Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?” as a method of judging art in an effort to influence other feminist artists that feminist artistic “uses of primitivism are retrograde.”⁸⁸ Here Lippard's example shows an evaluation of what is seen in western society as nature-based or primitivist art as a hindrance to the progress of feminists working to be seen as human beings in a sexist society. Ortner both

⁸⁷Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 164.

⁸⁸Lucy Lippard, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 44.

genders non-western art by placing it within a western construction of gender and distances herself from it in an effort to gain social power. Lippard uses this example to pose the question of whether white feminist praxis for social change should focus on changing the “dominant culture” or if “distinctly female qualities should be discarded in favor of an unattainable, overrated (and undesirable) androgyny.”⁸⁹

While white feminist activists may participate in, as do western Orientalist thinkers, perpetuating the denigration of non-western culture, they help clarify a structure of power that is similar to that described by Said regarding how Native art is viewed. Lippard notes that there is a categorization within western art that defines art that results in objects or experiences that can be used in an everyday manner, such as quilting or folk songs, as feminine. This type of art form is often labeled as “low” art, whereas more abstract art forms with little use in everyday living are labeled as “high” and are often given the most attention when produced by men. Lippard further notes a tendency for high art to assimilate aspects of low art when it is convenient and when the high art form is given complete control over how the now upgraded low art will be presented.⁹⁰ Lippard's later work includes art of Kathy Vargas who, as a Chicana, creates art based on the belief that “non-Western images are discarded in the dominant culture, along with women's work, which is seen as nonintellectual.”⁹¹ Though the reason the dominant culture discards non-western images is not given by Lippard to compare to the perceived lack of intellectualism given for the dismissal of feminine work, Said's work on Orientalism indicates that at least part of the processes of discarding happens through the promotion of obscurantive narratives employed by western institutions. More importantly, however, is the recognition that western culture sees non-western art and “women's work” as similarly disposable.

⁸⁹Ibid., 44-5.

⁹⁰Ibid., 46.

⁹¹Lippard, *Mixed Blessings*, 84.

Interestingly, Said points out one example of a representation of the relationship between the Orient and the west in which the feminine gender role is given to the ruler. He cites Britain's representative in Egypt, Lord Cromer, as making a comparison between the French and English methods of ruling the Orient. Cromer relates that people in the Orient prefer French rule because the English are “undemonstrative, shy ... with [their] social exclusiveness and insular habits,” while the French are “vivacious and cosmopolitan,” do “not know what the word shyness means,” and are “within ten minutes ... apparently on terms of intimate friendship with any casual acquaintance.”⁹² Cromer uses gender overtly by further portraying British rule as that of an “elderly matron,” while French possesses “somewhat artificial charms.” Said picks up on this use and relates it as the “contrast between the solid British nanny and the French coquette,” but as his interest in the passage is to confirm the privilege of English understanding of imperial rule, he does not comment on the gendered description of the rulers.

Said includes a phrase within his quotation of Cromer which could gender the relationship between the ruler and the people experiencing rule. At the end of a block quotation describing the preference of the Egyptian people for French rule, he has Cromer stating that an Egyptian person “looks coldly on the Englishman, and rushes into the arms of the Frenchman.”⁹³ While this language could represent the perceived child-like nature of non-western peoples rejecting a nanny, the language, including the phrase “looks coldly,” fits better with the gendering of non-western peoples as adult and feminine when used in combination with the wording of “artificial charms” used by Cromer relates better to describe the French as a person who is not as interested in childcare as in heterosexual romantic relationships.

Said goes on to describe how the west explicitly views the Orient as “supine and

⁹²Said, *Orientalism*, 211.

⁹³*Ibid.*

feminine.”⁹⁴ He cites “entrepreneurial visionaries ... French scholars, administrators, geographers, and commercial agents” who, and now Said uses slightly sexualized language which is gendered in the context of an assumed heterosexual relationship, “poured out their exuberant activity.”⁹⁵ Here Said is showing how the west relies on the land and people it has colonized for natural resources and labor, and thus the west is seen as a necessity that nurtures the colonizing state. Said's description also shows how the act of colonization can be viewed as a type of reproduction of the colonizing culture which replaces the culture, or lack of “mature” culture, of the Oriental populous. By noting the gender of the Orient in the view of the west, Said enables us to use a feminist analysis in our examination of how the west views Indigenous culture.

On the same topic of Said's critique of an apolitical examination of one's own position when viewing, Lippard notes that the feminist analysis, though, does not go far enough. She notes that “women of color have been monitoring the feminist movement since its beginning, resisting ... white women artists' assumptions that black art [has] no choice but to be political.”⁹⁶ Here again, white feminism can contribute to an othered understanding of Indigenous culture by pigeonholing non-white culture into a category that fits into its reality.

Said and Linda Tuhiwai Smith's research on the value of narrative, the construction of identity, the structure of representation and the importance of noting the politics of a person representing, show us that western ontology does not allow for an act of viewing that permits the existence of fully human Native peoples. In addition to this, Lippard and Said demonstrate that feminism encourages the crucial inclusion of examining one's own politics in research, but does not always take race into account when creating theory. Taken together, these scholars present a general challenge to the perceived objectivity that western scholars have assumed when viewing

⁹⁴Ibid., 220.

⁹⁵Ibid., 219-20.

⁹⁶Lippard, *Mixed Blessings*, 53.

Indigenous peoples and their cultures. Finally, their definition of culture in the west as something that needs positivistic categorization allows a better understanding of how an othered culture is viewed and how gendered acts of viewing can change the reality of a culture into something that allows western people to feel more comfortable with the existence of an “other.” This, in turn, allows a better understanding of how western culture can create an image of dehumanized Nativeness for western people to view and understand when interacting with situations, ideas and peoples beyond the borders of the west.

Can resistance to non-Native appropriation of Native culture by Native peoples be seen as a continuation of resistance to colonization of Native land and bodies?

Joanna Kadi, an Arab-American feminist and self-described “cultural worker,” writes that cultural appropriation “means taking possession of specific aspects of someone else's culture in unethical, oppressive ways.”⁹⁷ She provides an example of this possession by describing her interaction with white people who play the derbeke, an instrument her grandmother cherished. After attempting to gain relief from the racism she experiences as an Arab person by disassociating herself from her culture, she decides to find a derbeke and learn to play it. She becomes frustrated when she learns that white people have a monopoly on teaching people how to play her instrument and, at the same time, have very little idea about where the derbeke comes from and how it should be played. Kadi states that this situation developed within her “a familiar mix of anger and fear. Anger at the casual (mis)use by white people of important aspects of culture from various communities of color, fear that such groups would provide the only resource available.”⁹⁸ Kadi's description of her predicament fits the sentiment to which those who agree that cultural appropriation exists refer when identifying why the use of culture from marginalized

⁹⁷Joanna Kadi, *Thinking Class*, 117.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 116.

groups by non-marginalized groups is wrong.⁹⁹

Since one system of oppression used frequently in unethical possession of culture is and has been colonialism, and when working with any cultural topic it is necessary to identify where social power lies, to identify how “possession” in Kadi's definition operates, colonial power must be examined. This is especially true when the culture being examined is an Indigenous culture. Haunani-Kay Trask emphasizes this when she writes “colonialism began with conquest and is today maintained by a settler administration created out of the doctrine of cultural hierarchy, a hierarchy in which European Americans and whiteness dominate non-European Americans and darkness.”¹⁰⁰ With regard to Kadi's “possession,” then, Edward Said and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, as noted in the previous section, describe colonialism as a tool used by western cultures to collect knowledge from the Indigenous world¹⁰¹ while at the same time distributing western culture as a superior alternative to Indigenous practices and ways of interacting with knowledge.¹⁰² Linda Tuhiwai Smith's analysis reveals colonialism as one of the ways western cultures can remove the original context of an Indigenous piece of culture and recreate a context that allows for an understanding of the culture that removes the humanity of the peoples that produce that cultural work. Andrea Smith, in her work on Native spirituality, connects Linda Tuhiwai Smith's description of the colonialist system of collection of knowledge to an imperialist system of settler colonialism by citing Native spirituality's basis in the land of their people. She states, “Native religions ... are generally seen by Native peoples as relevant only to the particular land base from which they originate; they are not necessarily applicable to peoples coming from different land

⁹⁹This includes, among many others, bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 62; Mithlo, “A Realist View,” 106; Andrea Smith, “Spiritual Appropriation as Sexual Violence,” 98; Wendy Rose, “The Great Pretenders: Further Reflections on Whiteshamanism,” in *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 405.

¹⁰⁰Haunani-Kay Trask, “The Color of Violence,” in INCITE!, *The Color of Violence*, 83.

¹⁰¹Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 42-43; Said, *Orientalism*, 39; Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 67.

¹⁰²Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 58.

bases.”¹⁰³ Thus, Smith posits that, in the case of Native/Indigenous/First Nations peoples, the “possession of ... someone else's culture in unethical ... ways” can be understood as a means of removing a tool that Native people can use to claim their right to their original lands, thus facilitating the western project of settling Indigenous territory through genocide.¹⁰⁴

One tactic used by non-Native people who use Native culture inappropriately is to state that their use of the culture honors the cultural heritage of non-white races.¹⁰⁵ In addition to numerous and well-publicized examples of cultural appropriation in the world of sports team mascots,¹⁰⁶ examples can be found in western museum collectors buying objects for study with the intention of “saving” Native culture so that it can be understood, albeit through white museum curator's eyes, by future generations, thus “assisting” in Native cultural perpetuation. Non-Native people who rely on this argument while at the same time failing to ask permission for the use of cultural artifacts and imagery often rely on the myth of the noble savage to make their case. The noble savage myth places Indigeneity on a pedestal, allowing it only certain types of positive attributes. Specifically, the noble savage image can only accept Indigenous peoples as having an innate relationship and understanding of the Earth and with nature and as being stoic and above responding to hateful or petty attempts at communication.¹⁰⁷

Dagmar Wernitznig proposes that there is a development of this myth: she claims that the

¹⁰³ Andrea Smith, “Spiritual Appropriation as Sexual Violence,” 99.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Dagmar Wernitznig, *Going Native or Going Naive?: White Shamanism and the Neo-noble Savage* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003), xxii.

¹⁰⁶ George Lavender, “Insult to Injury? American Indian Mascots,” *Making Contact*, no. 05-14, 28 January 2014, Oakland, National Radio Project, audio, <http://www.radioproject.org/2014/01/insult-to-injury-american-indian-sports-mascots/>; Carol Morello, “Churches Propose a Boycott of Redskins Unless the Team Changes its Name,” *Washington Post*, 1 March 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/churches-propose-a-boycott-of-redskins-unless-the-team-change-its-name/2014/03/01/488669bc-a189-11e3-b8d8-94577ff66b28_story.html; National Congress of American Indians, “Proud to Be,” video, <http://www.ncai.org/>; National Congress of American Indians, “Ending the Legacy of Racism in Sports and the Era of Harmful ‘Indian’ Sports Mascots,” policy paper, October 2013, http://www.ncai.org/attachments/PolicyPaper_mijApMoUWDbjqFtjAYzQWlqLdrwZvsYfakBwTHpMATcOroYolpN_NCAI_Harmful_Mascots_Report_Ending_the_Legacy_of_Racism_10_2013.pdf.

¹⁰⁷ Marianna Torgovnick, *Primitive Passions*, 152; Wernitznig, *Going Native or Going Naive?* xvii-xviii.

noble savage was initially portrayed by western culture as a child or infant. Wernitznig proposes that western society developed this portrayal into the current noble savage myth, which more closely resembles the description of the stoic, naturalistic representation described above, on the grounds of a dissatisfaction with a western culture that he calls “overcivilized.”¹⁰⁸ Westerners, she suggests, turned to a newly-created image of the noble savage to give them an excuse to reject a culture that was over-commodified and that relied too much on material possession for satisfaction. Wernitznig calls this current western construction for describing Indigenous peoples the neo-noble savage.

While Wernitznig's historical recitation is useful, her belief that a culture can be overcivilized and her insistence on aligning nobility with naïve infantilism undermine her argument. Though a western understanding of civilization is often exclusive to European values, Wernitznig does not make that distinction and thus the reader must understand her definition of civilization to be encompassing of all types of necessarily beneficial standards. By conflating civilization with the west, Wernitznig trivializes Indigenous civilizations and significantly reduces the credibility of her argument. Further, the very type civilization that Wernitznig claims that the west was attempting to avoid is the same that characterizes Wernitznig's second social construction of the noble savage. That is, the characteristics of being stoic, patient and understanding are all ideals for which western civilization strives. Thus, Wernitznig's argument that western society was escaping a contrived “overcivilization” through the use of the noble savage makes little sense. The other weakness in her presentation of the myth of the noble savage is that, to create a new category of western imagery from Native peoples, she claims that a child-like essence maps easily onto the image represented by the noble savage. While noble children exist in our understanding of the world, our first impressions of innocence do not correspond well

¹⁰⁸Wernitznig, *Going Native or Going Naïve?* xviii.

to those of royalty, and thus the metaphor that she relies on fails.

Philip J. Deloria makes a case for the continuous existence of the concept of the noble savage since the Enlightenment period. He calls the concept a “flexible ideology.”¹⁰⁹ In his understanding of the noble savage, New Age western desires for a release from an over-commodified society fit easily with, for example, early twentieth century Boy Scout administrator's desires for a moral, yet discrete, role model for young boys in the United States.

Much of the focus on Native cultural appropriation has been on how non-Native people, and especially white people, have used Native culture to procure resources for themselves at the expense of the integrity of the culture from which they are taking.¹¹⁰ Most often this resource comes in the form of money. Frequently cited examples of this type of appropriation include selling Native-appearing regalia, selling seemingly Native experiences such as sweats, or selling Native language books.¹¹¹ This critique is important, as the value of money is easily understood as a resource that can be exchanged; when juxtaposed with a resource that is not as tangible, such as culture, it is easy to see how there could be ethical issues involved with the exchange and use of the more abstract commodity. However, when culture is used without the involvement or immediate exchange of money, there is more ambiguity in the response by critics of cultural appropriation. This use, though, by our definition above, is still cultural appropriation and needs to be examined with equal intensity.

One of the uses of the research done on the type of cultural appropriation that benefits those using Native culture monetarily is that it provides a clear parallel between the gain of

¹⁰⁹Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 4.

¹¹⁰Ward Churchill, *Indians Are Us?: Culture and Genocide in Native North America* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1994), 217.

¹¹¹The most recent well-publicized occurrence of this is James Ray's use of Native context in causing the death of three workshop participants. See Marc Lacey, “New Age Guru Guilty in Sweat Lodge Deaths,” *New York Times*, 22 June 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/23/us/23sweat.html>, among many other reports. For an argument for Tlingit resistance to colonization through commodification, see Alexis Buntin, “Sharing Culture or Selling Out? Developing the Commodified Persona in the Heritage Industry,” *American Ethnologist* 35, no. 3 (August 2008).

capital and of the appropriation of capital in the form of real estate and land that is forcibly removed from Native communities through the processes of imperialism and colonialism. Land, in western culture, both has a monetary value, being understood in the context of being able to be sold and bought, as well as cultural value. Thus, to make a strong argument that appropriation of Native culture is the same as colonization of Native land, one must rely on the western understanding of colonization as commodity-driven cultural appropriation and also equate commodity-driven cultural appropriation with non-commodity driven appropriation.

When examining cases of the use of Native culture by non-Native people, whether they involve the exchange of money or not, part of what must be addressed is the importance of permission. Since in many cases title of cultural practices is possessed communally, it is not clear how permission to use a particular cultural practice can be conferred. If a white person decides they would like to lock their hair in the tradition of African American people, to whom does that white person address their request? It is because of this lack of quantifiable ownership that the term cultural appropriation must rely on a definition of oppression to clarify when a practice is culturally harmful or not.

When oppression becomes an integral part of the definition of cultural appropriation the stakes on which a culture is defined become much higher. Specifically, one must know who has power to approve permission within a community, or even who has access to identify with being part of a community itself. Unfortunately, part of the outcome of a history of cultural appropriation is that identity itself is appropriated, making enforcement of social norms for the use of culture impossible without a nuanced examination of social power, history and identity.

Ward Churchill emphasizes the importance of addressing how identity is policed. He cites how the United States government strategy of quantifying the proportion of Native ancestors that it identifies as originally Native has set the “extermination” date of government-recognized

Native peoples by the year 2080.¹¹² Clearly, there will be many Native peoples who identify as Native even after the U.S. government has removed their government-sanctioned identity, whether that date is reached in 2080 or at any other time. Val Napoleon cites the Canadian Indian Act and its successors as another, similar method of policing identity through citizenship and nationality. She states that the Canadian government “will be relieved of its constitutional obligation of protection, and its historic assimilation goals will be fulfilled.”¹¹³ This is because Canadian law that defines who is Indigenous, and thus deserving of the privileges and resources allotted to make up for historic abuses, allows for First Nations peoples to legally disappear within two generations.

Similar to the removal of identity, cultural appropriation can distance the important, sometimes sacred, cultural aspects of a society. If these are lost to the community future cultural production becomes more tenuous. This result can be equated to the control of Native bodies by colonizing powers. In her essay “Spiritual Appropriation as Sexual Violence” Andrea Smith, a Cherokee scholar, introduces the idea that, given English speakers use the word “to know” to both express the possession of knowledge of something as well as to have sex with a person, to make use of knowledge without the consent of the people from whom the knowledge comes is the same as having sex with a person without their consent.¹¹⁴ Smith connects the two using the strength of the history of a word in English. This is appropriate because it is through using the word “to know” in English that modern non-Native people in the United States express their desire for “quick spiritual enlightenment, ... 'authentic culture,' ... and ... interreligious dialogue.”¹¹⁵

Edward Said echoes this use of the act of knowing in a discussion of representation in his book

¹¹²Churchill, *Indians Are Us?*, 92-3.

¹¹³Val Napoleon, “Extinction by Number: Colonialism Made Easy,” *Canadian Journal of Law and Society/Revue Canadienne Droit et Société* 16, no. 1 (2001): 121-26.

¹¹⁴Andrea Smith, “Spiritual Appropriation as Sexual Violence,” 97.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 98.

Orientalism, stating “knowledge of the Orient, because generated out of strength, in a sense *creates* the Orient.”¹¹⁶ Said is stating that if western people possess knowledge of Indigenous peoples and use that knowledge without consent, or from a position of “strength,” then they are able to control those people, and their bodies, in a manner that allows western people to shape Indigenous peoples into whatever forms western people believe that they should exist.

Andrea Smith and Said, then, make a connection between inappropriate use of non-commodified knowledge and control of human bodies. This connection is useful when considering that resisting cultural appropriation is akin to resisting coercive imperial labor laws over a group of Indigenous peoples or the restrictions on Indigenous bodies to pass across borders or into segregated spaces reserved for non-Native or white people. Because of this work, Native demand for control over aspects of Native culture can be equated with movements that have resisted slavery and supported immigrant and civil rights.

Among the methods used by colonizing forces to control bodies, control of the land on which bodies rely for housing, food and identity is one of the most powerful. Marianna Torgovnick, in her analysis of the tendencies of the United States film industry when it portrays Native peoples, states that “the films initially define Indians as different from whites, but then show how the best among the whites think and feel like Indians. Bad white people usurp the Indians' physical space; but good whites move into their mental and spiritual space. And once whites occupy the space close to nature that has been coded as 'Indian,' actual Indians have nowhere to go but off into the proverbial sunset.”¹¹⁷ Torgovnick shows that for Native peoples to be removed from representation in mainstream western narratives non-Native people must occupy both the land and the culture of Native peoples. If one aspect of Native ownership is left

¹¹⁶Said, *Orientalism*, 40 (emphasis in the original).

¹¹⁷Torgovnick, *Primitive Passions*, 139-40. This passage is quoted and commented on in Wernitznig, *Going Native or Going Naive?* xxii.

under Native control, viewers of western films are not able to arrive at the socially comfortable fallacy that Native bodies have disappeared from modern culture and thus there exist no current Native issues on which they can act to reduce current colonial hegemony.

Torgovnick's statement also brings up a separation between “good” and “bad” non-Native peoples in western film representations. As mentioned above, white people using Native culture sometimes rationalize their use by stating that they are honoring Native culture by making it more widely, and thus better, known. Further, they can distance themselves from seeing themselves as oppressors by demonstrating that there exists a group of people that are removing a physical resource from Native ownership. This works, as stated above, because the land in western culture is more easily connected with capital than spiritual and cultural property. Torgovnick's observation shows us that, since both these types of people are needed to invisibilize Native peoples from a humanized representation, both types of occupation of Native space are harmful to Native people and their agency defining their own identity.

The issue of land is continued from Torgovnick by Andrea Smith, who states that, in reference to her discussion on the possession of knowledge, “the primary reason for the continuing genocide of Native peoples has less to do with ignorance and more to do with material conditions. Non-Indians continue to oppress Indians because Indians occupy land resources that the dominant society wants.”¹¹⁸ Her reasoning is that Native land in the United States currently holds energy resources that multinational corporations, which possess huge amounts of political power, would like to develop. Land resources in this case can include a reference to historic possession. Even though Native peoples have been so often removed from their land to be placed on unwanted land, the mere existence of land set aside for Native possession gives weight to the existence of a history in which Native peoples in the United States owned all the land. This is

¹¹⁸Andrea Smith, “Spiritual Appropriation as Sexual Violence,” 98.

because, though the history of the United States honoring treaties with Native peoples is poor, the physical space that has been given is a reference to the history of annexation of desired resources.

Said also ties land to culture by stating that “the slow and often bitterly disputed recovery of [previously colonized] geographical territory which is at the heart of decolonization is preceded ... by the charting of cultural territory.”¹¹⁹ Here Said is not only stating that land, or “geographical territory,” is central to resistance to colonization, but that cultural use must be clearly defined before territorial decolonization can take place. If claims on culture are prerequisites to claims on land, then understanding how and when the appropriation of culture takes place seems to be a crucial aspect of resistance to colonization. Said goes on, partly quoting Basil Davidson, to say that the process of resistance involves a “period of 'primary resistance,' literally fighting against outside intrusion,” followed by a “period of secondary, that is, ideological resistance, when efforts are made to reconstitute a 'shattered community.’”¹²⁰ Given his first statement, one must assume that the period of primary resistance is a step that does not become a permanent piece of the process of decolonization until the “ideological resistance” takes place.

According to Said, land must be considered after the possession and use of culture is considered, Andrea Smith states that land is the primary motive for improper use of culture and Torgovnick states that the two aspects of colonization cannot be properly understood unless both are present in an analysis. Said and Torgovnick would agree that resistance to the appropriation of culture is equal to or of more importance than resistance to the appropriation of land by colonizing powers. The fact that Andrea Smith states that the reason for improper use of knowledge is the avenue used by colonizers to access Indigenous-controlled land suggests that, at most, land and culture have equal importance when considering how resources for decolonization

¹¹⁹Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 209.

¹²⁰Ibid.

should be distributed. All three, however, would certainly agree that resistance to colonization would not have been completed until both land and culture have been recovered and completely controlled.

Cultural appropriation erases from western culture the idea that Native peoples exist and are able to speak for themselves. Wernitznig states that “Indian exile and disappearance [from social narratives] is not to be considered distressing [to western colonizing societies] as long as there is [*sic*] whites inheriting their ways.”¹²¹ Anthropologist and poet Wendy Rose cites Vine Deloria Jr. explaining that “the realities of Indian belief and existence have become so misunderstood and distorted at this point that when a real Indian stands up and speaks the truth at any given moment, he or she is not only unlikely to be believed, but will probably be contradicted and 'corrected' by the citation of some non-Indian.”¹²² These issues relate directly to topics of authenticity and representation and are concerning without reference to genocide and annexation of land. As seen above, however, the practice of cultural appropriation may be understood to have equal weight as the pre-emptive bombing of Indigenous villages in Southeast Alaska by United States warships, as had happened soon after the transfer of ownership from Russia to the United States in Angoon, as a method of establishing control over Native people.¹²³

While insisting that the concept of oppression be present in definition of cultural appropriation helps us dispel some ambiguities that exist in the common understanding of the idea of appropriation, to fully realize the extent of the topic, one must examine the history how the west has relied on the concept of the noble savage when addressing Native identity and culture. Once this historical work has been done to show how pervasive cultural appropriation is in the west, anti-colonial theorists must work to understand that the significance of cultural

¹²¹Wernitznig, *Going Native or Going Naive?* xxii.

¹²²Rose, “The Great Pretenders,” 404.

¹²³As described by Eve G. Reckley, “Angoon Account of Bombardment Challenges Military Reports,” in *In Commemoration* (Kootznoowoo Heritage Foundation of Angoon, n.d.), 9–16.

appropriation is of concern beyond the commodified use Indigenous culture by non-Native people to make money, but in fact can exist on the same level as the long history of genocide used against Native people by white people and Europeans to gain control over Native land and bodies.

Realist ideology in art created by Alaska Native people

Nancy Marie Mithlo focuses on how contemporary colonization of Native culture effects derogatory images of Native people by commenting on representations of Native people in the United States. Her article, based on interviews with Native women artists in the United States, shows the importance of control of Indigenous culture, identity and representation within the Native American communities in the United States.¹²⁴ This interest is perhaps due to the colonial history of Indigenous people in the United States. “Traditional” art of Indigenous peoples has been codified by western anthropologists. Western people have only to access these codifications to present their work, in whole or in part, as Indigenous. Further, by using the theories ascribed to specific Indigenous patterns to describe their work, non-Indigenous people can claim their work is, in the sense of their reference to western interpretation of Indigenous lives, authentic. Because the anthropological codification and theorization that enables this appropriation of Indigenous art form can be seen as a part of the colonial process, an Indigenous response to both anthropological work and western art using Indigenous motifs is necessary in order to work towards reducing the harm done through the violence employed by western militaries against Native people.

Native artists, then, are in a particular position to address cultural appropriation of Native culture by non-Native people. Art is a formalized aspect of culture that, because of its institutionalization, is often considered a commodity. As such, is subject to transfer between

¹²⁴Nancy Marie Mithlo, “A Realist View.”

people, including people of different cultures. Since no two people possess the same cultural background,¹²⁵ any transfer of art will result in the passing of a piece of culture across different power structures. These exchanges have the potential to expose and thus weaken the power structure they navigate often; however, privileged people and societies often ignore the power structures that surround cultural entities.¹²⁶ When a system of power is ignored, an exchange of culture relies on both parties acknowledging the status quo without outwardly identifying it. This strengthens the significance of the system of social power. Some systems of social power, such as colonialism, are especially adept at hiding the significance of the possession of another's culture from those communities that have historically benefited through the possession of another's land and time.¹²⁷ Any transfer of art will also result in the establishment of a relationship between the creator of the art and the possessor. This relationship can sometimes be used later as a means of leverage to transfer resources back to a potentially marginalized art-creating community. Finally, and similarly, a transfer of commodified art can sometimes be a means of supporting the economy of a marginalized art-creating community.

Cultural appropriation relies on an essentialist understanding of the traditional aspects of Native art. All art created by Native people can be considered traditional in that Native traditions develop to take advantage of changing conditions. In addition, all art currently being created by Alaska Native peoples can be considered contemporary, even if the art very closely resembles art created by Native peoples before European invasions, simply because it is being currently created. Susan Fair states that “categorizations of [Native] artists,” and thus the art that those artists produce, “as 'traditional' or 'contemporary' ... are nearly always imposed by outsiders.”¹²⁸

¹²⁵See also, though “sometimes, people are not so different from one another,” in Hiram Perez, “You Can Have My Brown Body and Eat it, Too!” *Social Text* 23, nos. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 2005): 187.

¹²⁶Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 117, 122.

¹²⁷Mithlo, “A Realist View,” 111-12.

¹²⁸Susan W. Fair, *Alaska Native Art: Tradition, Innovation, Continuity* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska

Thus, despite the clear option of defining one's art as traditional or contemporary, Fair states that Native artists are “nearly always” only given one label and no choice in how they are perceived.¹²⁹

Cultural appropriation operates primarily by imposing labels on similarly essentialized and exoticized representations of Native art. It relies on the dominant society's understanding of a people that have been systematically made invisible through government and social group's acts of colonization.¹³⁰ To have an audience make sense of an appropriative work as Native, the creator must make reference to “universally” recognized aspects of the Native cultural world. From a dominant society's perspective, those aspects can only be concepts that have been accepted as historically Native. Usually this results in coding the work with references to “pre-contact” Native artwork.

The “pre-contact” tropes that are used by non-Native artists and other people are usually those that can be recognized by a broad segment of the US population. Because of the effects of colonization, the broadest Native tropes are overtly degrading or dehumanizingly simple.¹³¹ Thus, the use of these codes often extends western colonial control over Native representation and identity. Mithlo's work on how best to respond to derogatory images of Native people in US culture provides a useful framework from which to begin when addressing whether these tropes can be found in non-Native use of Native culture. Most of the examples she addresses are public images of Native people used as brands and mascots, but she also names US cultural productions that are based in song and theater.¹³² Because the images of Native people that she cites, such as the use of the faces and heads of Native people by sports teams across the United States, can be

Press, 2006), xxiii.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 26.

¹³¹Mithlo, “A Realist View,” 108.

¹³²Ibid., 111-12.

seen as portraiture, and thus a type of art, the theory she presents can be used to critique art in addition to the other subjects she presents as sites of non-Native representation of Native people. In addition, I extend Mithlo's theory to potentially derogatory uses of other forms of Native culture, even to the extent of the culture that is created through socially constructed identities. Mithlo begins to address this with an example of non-Native people temporarily identifying as Native people by dressing up as Native during Halloween. My use of her theory expands upon this example to include accidental or purposeful use of non-stereotypical representations of Native identity.

Mithlo frames the debate on whether certain types of use of Native imagery are derogatory by defining two responses to stereotypical Native representations. On one side, the side in which she places herself, are the realists. They are those who believe that the images are harmful and who work to remove them from society. Mithlo calls the other group the mentalists and describes two bases for their belief. Mithlo states that some mentalists see negative representations of Native people are simply pictures that cannot influence culture and society, or are, in other words, “inert.”¹³³ Others occupy the mentalist position as a strategy to exist in a society that responds to such pervasive racial and colonial violence that addressing the image politics of negative representations is seen as “ultimately inconsequential” because of its “purely cognitive” status.¹³⁴

Mithlo's categorizations can be used to begin to identify the more basic political platform of people who think about non-Native possession of Native art and art created to appear as Native art. In this case, realists would be people who recognize the cultural significance of possessing Native arts, and mentalists would see the art as simply an aesthetic object, without any tie to its current context or historical past. Since the issue of cultural appropriation is much more complex

¹³³Ibid., 105.

¹³⁴Ibid., 106.

than simply classifying people into a political binary, Mithlo's categorization is used as a starting point to a discussion that often includes personal histories of racism, colonialism and institutionalized systems of inequality.

Among those whom Mithlo identifies as realists, there are a variety of positions that present themselves as options as to how images influence society. In her essay, Mithlo does not differentiate between these positions, focusing mostly on mentalists and the resulting effects that mentalist and realist ideology have on society. To effectively extend her theory, I will explore different positions within the realist ideology.

The argument used by supporters of stereotypical Native images, especially those used to represent sports teams, that the use of an image, even in its most extreme dissonance with humanity, supports Native communities by giving them publicity is realist in that it recognizes that images have cultural impact, but is in disagreement with the position that stereotypes are necessarily negative. With regard to cultural appropriation, this position is represented by non-Native people who want to possess Native objects because they want to show their support for Native people without investigating the appropriateness of the context of the possession.

Ruth B. Phillips illustrates this example with her work on professional and amateur collectors in the Northeastern United States in the early twentieth century. She states, quoting the text accompanying a museum exhibit on Native culture, that a belief in social Darwinism only allowed for an understanding of Native culture to be in “an inevitable decline leading toward a vanishing point 'around 1900.’”¹³⁵ Thus museums had to respond to “the Western stress on objects, on 'seeing', and on 'art' ... over nonmaterial aspects of culture, such as kinship or political activities, which are far more difficult to narrate through objects.”¹³⁶ Though it may be a bit of a

¹³⁵Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), 51.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*

stretch to guess at the exact intent of the collectors, one may infer that they believed they were collecting for the good of humanity, if not for Native people themselves. Further, if indeed the ethnographers were not collecting Native objects for the good of Native people, collectors were, at the very least, collecting for the good of a humanity that they erroneously believed included Native people in its social imagination.

Modern examples of realists who misuse contexts could include white people conducting sweat-lodge ceremonies for profit, the use of allusions to Native art and performance in the traditions of non-Native summer sleep-away camps, and, as noted above the persistence in use of images of Native people as mascots for U.S. non-Native sports teams.¹³⁷ Any defense of the continued use of these examples would fall into Mithlo's definition of mentalist understanding of Native representation as well, depending on each person's intent and understanding of the influence of art and objects on culture and society.

An example of this form of realism in Alaska includes white people creating and selling Alaska Native-appearing art at Native art markets because of real or imaged connections with Alaska Native communities.¹³⁸ The intent of these people may be to make a profit, but they most likely also do not intend to harm Native people. They may, in fact, see their work creating and selling art that appears to be Native in a realist frame, or, as helping the Native community by showing that non-Native people are not afraid to associate themselves with what they see as Native art.

Having addressed the aspect of Mithlo's realists who see the cultural impact of possession and use of Native art in any context as positive, I now move on to examples of the types of

¹³⁷Terry Macy and Daniel Hart, "White shamans and plastic medicine men," *Native Voices Public Television Workshop*, DVD (Seattle: University of Washington, 2000). Also partially available through CorpCorax, "White Shamans and Plastic Medicine Men, Part 1 of 3" and "White Shamans and Plastic Medicine Men, Part 2 of 3," *youtube.com*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCLmT_M-qtg; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CPxoSp58pE> (parts one and two of three parts).

¹³⁸Da-ka-xeen Mehner (class lecture, University of Alaska Fairbanks, ART 493, 7 April 2011).

realists on which Mithlo focuses. Mithlo's realists concentrate on “the total eradication” of derogatory Native representations.¹³⁹ That is, they both believe that non-Native representations of Native peoples influence social understanding of Native peoples and see negative and false representations as harmful to Native peoples. To illustrate this position, I will highlight several Alaska Native artists who use their art to reveal both the social impact of images as well as, in the same vein as Kadi, the negative impact that the dismissal of historical injustice can have when applied to access to Native art. Though coercive force used against Tlingit people in Sitka, Alaska differs from the colonial history of other parts of Alaska, there are enough similarities between the experiences of the many different Indigenous nations in Alaska to make a brief survey of contemporary Alaska Native artists useful to my project of identifying the use of Tlingit culture by non-Tlingit people.

Larry McNeil's work, “Real Indian,” a photograph of the artist in front of an abandoned storefront claiming, via a dilapidated highway billboard, to deal in “Real Indians,” is an example of resistance to exotifying portrayals of Native people by an Alaska Native artist. By placing himself in the frame, McNeil, a Tlingit/Nisgaá artist, establishes a direct relationship between the viewer and himself. This relationship can then be used to challenge the dehumanization of Native peoples who, when represented through the billboard and other similar texts, become rare, mystical and mythical beings. This billboard, though not a piece of Native art, conveys to the reader the promise of possessing, in the form of viewing, Native people and ideas, and thus can be seen as a tool to demonstrate the problematic nature of non-Native possession of Native culture.

Though McNeil, as an Alaska Native and member of Canada's First Nations, might not identify primarily with the term “Indian,” his experience as an Indigenous person in the United

¹³⁹Mithlo, “A Realist View,” 106.

States no doubt gives him familiarity with the use of the word and the hardships endured by Native American people in the contiguous United States who might more quickly identify as “Indian.” Because he can be seen to be both an “Indian” in that he is an Indigenous person and not “Indian” because the term Indian refers traditionally to Indigenous people from the contiguous US, his presence in his photo can be seen to both confront those who see Indigenous people as a disappeared people as well as those who conflate the identities of the many groups of Indigenous people into imprecise terms like “Alaska Native,” “Indian” or “Native American.” Just as distinct groups of Native people in Alaska are conflated when referred to by the term “Alaska Native,” because of US colonial history, Native peoples in the United States are conflated despite consisting of distinct groups of peoples. However, McNeil's main object in this work seems to center around taking the opportunity to reveal the excitement that western culture holds in authenticating Native peoples, and marveling in the “otherness” into which western culture defines Native peoples. McNeil's piece works well because Native exotification in the United States is a system of oppression that affects both the Native groups of the contiguous United States and Alaska Native peoples. Based on this work, the viewer can understand McNeil as one of Mithlo's realists. He not only resists the myths of disappearance and exotification, but points out that such myths are reality for many non-Native people in the United States.¹⁴⁰

Similar to McNeil's expressed solidarity with contiguous U.S. Native peoples, Nicholas Galanin, an artist of Tlingit and Aleut ancestry, uses a petroglyph of the logo of the Cleveland Indians baseball team in Sitka, Alaska to adjust the viewer's perception of what they might imagine Indigenous art to look like. Though his choice of logo is conspicuous in a political climate that is more and more aware of non-Native use of Native culture, he states that his object

¹⁴⁰Da-ka-xeen Mehner, “Institute of American Indian Arts” (class lecture, University of Alaska Fairbanks, ART 493, 10 February 2011).

was not to address the use of representations of Native peoples by non-Native people.¹⁴¹ Despite this, a person seeing his work branding the land that Tlingit people claim might see his work as both a statement emphasizing the sovereignty of the Tlingit people as well as a method to poke fun at a baseball team's use of a mascot that further marginalizes Native people through cartoonish dehumanizing representation by placing a representation of the logo in a majestic and decidedly non-cartoonish landscape.

Galanin's art directly addresses the appropriation of information on culture by anthropologists who study Native culture by creating masks of his own face made of bound paper on which are printed different texts, such as de Laguna's *Under Mount Saint Elias* and the sentence "Made in Indonesia" repeated to cover each page, that have represented Tlingit people to the non-Tlingit world.¹⁴² Through these works, Galanin can also be seen as one of Mithlo's realists, as his work both acknowledges the power in representations of Tlingit culture by non-Tlingit people and resists these works by using a format that is used by non-Native people to represent marginalized cultures.

Erica Lord's 2006 work "Artifact Piece Revisited" is a commentary on the representation of Native people in museums.¹⁴³ The piece follows James Luna's "Artifact Piece", in which Luna lies in a bed of sand on a museum display in a museum and is viewed by museum-goers.¹⁴⁴ Lord's use of this work provokes the discussion of appropriation of Native bodies through the cultural objects that museums collect. Like Galanin's work with bound paper and texts, and McNeil's photographic work, Lord uses her own body to create a more immediate relationship

¹⁴¹Nicholas Galanin, "Alaskan Artist Creates True Indian Petroglyphs," interview by Thomas Moore, *The Cleveland Fan*, 6 February 2013, <http://www.theclevelandfan.com/cleveland-indians/5-indians-archive/10787-alaskan-artist-incorporates-indians-logo-into-his-work>.

¹⁴²Da-ka-veen Mehner, "Pacific Rim Relationships" (class lecture University of Alaska Fairbanks, ART 493, 24 March 2011).

¹⁴³Da-ka-veen Mehner, "Identity" (class lecture, University of Alaska Fairbanks, ART 493, 29 March 2011).

¹⁴⁴Lee-Ann Martin, "Cross Over with Mr. Luna," in *Diversity and Dialogue*, ed. James H. Nottage (Indianapolis: Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, 2007), 27-28.

with non-Native people that has the potential to reverse the effects of the dehumanizing images that have been and are still prevalent in the United States.

Among these Alaska Native artists, I have found little evidence of mentalist politics. All artists, to the extent their statements and art portray, believe their art to have some social impact beyond simple aesthetics. Even Dempsey Bob, a Tlingit and Tahltan carver and designer,¹⁴⁵ who states of a robe going to an Australian exhibition, “if it is fine art, they will understand [the meaning of the art to the Tlingit people],” also states that Tlingit art “is more than just what you see.”¹⁴⁶ This suggests that, while there can be meaning found in the recognition of the time and effort put into learning both a method of art production and a piece of art itself, Native art, and, perhaps, all art, requires a contextual understanding of a people's history and culture.

I have found little academic work or statements of Alaska Native artists regarding appropriation of Alaska Native art. Part of this may be that Alaska Native cultures have moderately well-known practices of asking permission within the community for use of songs, dances, crests and other art-forms. This is not to say that such practices do not exist in Native communities of the contiguous United States. However, the practice is strong enough that Native people will ask forgiveness for the occasional use of a song or other cultural work that was used without prior proper consultation. This is demonstrated by a Native artist in Southeast Alaska stating, “You have to use permission, even before you use your own designs.”¹⁴⁷ This remark shows the need for a constant evaluation of how a piece of work will be seen and a constant self-evaluation of the reasons for creating and using Native designs and imagery in the first place.

¹⁴⁵Doreen Jensen and Polly Sargent, *Robes of Power: Totem Poles on Cloth* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993), 5.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴⁷Alexis Bunten, “Contemporary Northwest Coast Arts in the Artist's Words,” *Sharing Our Knowledge Clan Conference*, DVD, vol 6, audiovisual recordings of lectures presented at the 5th edition of the Tlingit Clan Conference, Juneau, AK, 2009 (Juneau, AK: Tlingit Readers, Inc., 2009), 1 hr., 20 min., 16 sec.

Kathryn Bunn-Marcuse, in her research on the cultural power of wearing Native vestments cites two examples of non-Native people accessing Native culture through clothing. Her first example is of t-shirts made to memorialize Native cultural events. Bunn-Marcuse's research shows that this type of clothing can be appropriately worn in all contexts by white and other non-Native people. This is, perhaps, because of the informality associated with the medium of t-shirts and t-shirt art in the dominant culture. She states, "unlike regalia, [t-shirts] are not limited to First Nations members or particular clans or moieties. Non-Native people with connections with Native communities may announce these affiliations by wearing shirts they have received at potlatches or feasts."¹⁴⁸ Bunn-Marcuse specifies that this use is appropriate for "non-Native people with connections," who "have received" shirts at Native events. Thus, while her research shows a more mentalist or soft-realist stance within the Tlingit community on the representation of Tlingit culture by non-Tlingit people, the potential use of t-shirts with Tlingit cultural significance can still be questioned when used by non-Tlingit people with no connection to the community or the cultural event at which the t-shirts were distributed.

Bunn-Marcuse also finds a more generalized mentalist attitude in Southeast Alaska Native communities with regard to commercialized Native designs when the designs are created by Native artists. She states, "clothing with designs by Native artists allow those who admire Native art to express their interest through their attire."¹⁴⁹ Her research shows a less restrictive ideology when the culture used has been commercialized and when at least part of the process of that commercialization benefits the Native people who claim that culture. Because of this relaxation of an understanding of proper representation of culture to any person who desires to

¹⁴⁸Kathryn Bunn-Marcuse, "Wearing Identity: The Strength of Expression Through Personal Adornment," *Sharing Our Knowledge Clan Conference*, DVD, vol 15, audiovisual recordings of lectures presented at the 5th edition of the Tlingit Clan Conference, Juneau, AK, 2009 (Juneau, AK: Tlingit Readers, Inc., 2009), 29 min., 45 sec.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

“express an interest,” this stance can be seen as not being concerned with the way in which the cultural product is being portrayed in public. As such, Mithlo's mentalist ideology more closely matches the research behind this statement.

Whether the interest mentioned by Bunn-Marcuse that is shown by non-Native people is based on a relationship with the artist of the design on their clothing or a relationship with the person honored at a cultural event does not play into Bunn-Marcuse's analysis of appropriate wear. One person's interest in wearing a Native design on their clothing might be motivated by a very different knowledge of Native history and modern culture. Following an understanding of cultural appropriation of marginalized cultures, if a person who owned and wore a t-shirt memorializing the passing of a relative or friend saw a person whom they knew had no relationship with the person memorialized purchase and wear that same shirt, the first person might then re-evaluate the importance of the t-shirt as a means of remembrance and/or challenge the latter person as to the reasons for wearing the shirt. Put in the context of anticolonial theory, if the person purchasing the shirt was non-Native, a Native person familiar with the person memorialized on a shirt might interpret the representation of that person as more greatly removed from their experience in having known the person. The likelihood of hypothetical situation occurring is slight. However, in small communities, people interact with each other enough to more easily establish informal records of how others behave. This community knowledge can be a powerful opportunity for collaboration as well as a means for the hypothetical Native person to understand how a non-Native person might represent a friend or family member by wearing a shirt from a ceremonial event.

Though not exactly at a mass-market scale, Larson and Lizardo, in their survey of Spanish youths' understanding of the commodification of Che Guevara's image on t-shirts, would reference this as an example of mass market theorist's belief that “Che's image owes its

commercial appeal to the *absence of political content*.”¹⁵⁰ That is, the image has become popular when its specific revolutionary politics are separated from the image so that a less specific politics of a general dissatisfaction with an unnamed and unanalyzed system is now evoked by Guevara's image. Bunn-Marcuse's non-specific statement of appropriate use of Native designs on clothes as available to any person with an “interest” in Native culture does not limit the understanding of the wearer to the specific knowledge of who created the image, for what purpose the image was created, and the significance, if any, of wearing the image. When combined with a historical white tradition of taking from marginalized cultures without questioning one's position in society, even to positively “express their interest,” this practice could be seen as harmful.

In contrast to this result, Larson and Lizardo conclude that, when Spanish youth are asked to name a person associated with the time period during which Guevara's historical political influence was strongest, they would name Guevara about one out of twenty times, the sixth most popular response.¹⁵¹ The rate at which they cited Guevara was sometimes even higher than the rate at which their elders, who came of age at Guevara's highest social impact and thus supposedly would have a greater chance of being influenced by his politics, would name Guevara.¹⁵² They interpret this finding to signify that Guevara's radical politics have not been forgotten despite the commodification of his image by mass producing materialist markets.

The second example Bunn-Marcuse describes of appropriate use of Native designs by non-Native people comes from her interview of Haida clothing designer Dorothy Grant. Bunn-Marcuse quotes Grant statement that the non-Native people who buy Grant's clothes “have a real

¹⁵⁰Tina Rosenberg, “The World Resurrects Che,” *New York Times*, 20 July 1997, <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/07/20/opinion/the-world-resurrects-che.html>. Quoted in and emphasis added by Jeff A. Larson and Omar Lizardo, “Generations, Identities and the Collective Memory of Che Guevara,” *Sociological Forum* 22, no. 4 (December 2007): 429.

¹⁵¹Larson and Lizardo, “Memory of Che Guevara,” 442.

¹⁵²*Ibid.*, 448.

connection or want a connection to Haida art or northwest coast art, and she celebrates these connections. Quote, 'When they buy my clothing, it is a statement about their alignment to Haida culture and their acceptance of it, and it is a really good thing to bridge our cultures like that through clothing.'"¹⁵³ That is, Bunn-Marcuse shows Grant approving of the possession of her art work in any context by any person. This presents the risk that non-Native people could use her clothes to mask the racism of their actions by, for example, using Grant's clothes to create the impression of their being a “politically correct” or “culturally sensitive” person while questioning the legitimacy of Haida or northwest coast Native sovereignty. The framing Larson and Lizardo provide more clearly presents the question of whether an absence of political knowledge of the struggle for Native sovereignty enables non-Native people to wear classy clothes marked with formline designs in contexts that benefit their status as knowledgeable of the Native political struggle.

Grant's statement places her representational politics in the same location as Mithlo's, that is, as a “soft” realist. If realists recognize the effects of images and art on society, Grant recognizes that there is a positive effect of non-Native people purchasing, possessing and wearing Native artwork. She notes that there is a history of colonialism in that there needs to exist a “bridge” between cultures, as opposed to a one-way vacuum of colonial oppression, and sees condemnation of non-Native use of clothes showing formline design as counterproductive to ending colonialism.

Grant does not note, however, any detrimental effect of non-Native people possessing Native-identifiable artwork as clothing. She does state that one of the reasons she entered into the business of Native art designed clothing was that “She was strongly motivated by non-native designers who were incorporating North West Coast native art into their clothing. She felt it was

¹⁵³Bunn-Marcuse, “Wearing Identity,” 30 min., 24 sec.

a poor representation of a beautiful art form,”¹⁵⁴ but this is a critique of the aesthetic quality of the art produced by the non-Native artists, not a political statement on the economic and colonial effects of non-Native people creating art that passes as Native art.

Mithlo provides not only a framework for how to respond to stereotypical images of Native people, but also suggests that, while she is of a realist leaning, that there is value in behaving as a de facto mentalist so as not to censor stereotypical images. The reasoning she provides is “that the enduring nature of stereotypes indicates that essentialized images are vital in the interaction of diverse groups.”¹⁵⁵ By doing this, she suggests that the essentialization of an identity is not necessarily a negative act.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith clarifies the meanings of this stance by stating that, while Native communities must resist a biologic interpretation of essentialized race, essentialism is sometimes used by Natives communities to access an Indigenous spiritual identity.¹⁵⁶ She further complicates the issue by stating that essentialism is often conflated with, but sometimes runs parallel to, notions of authenticity. She describes how these notions provide their own avenues for solidarity between Native groups towards resisting colonialism as well as pitfalls in which Native people are trapped by dominant cultural expectations of stereotypical imagined “pre-contact” behavior.¹⁵⁷ Linda Tuhiwai Smith is a realist in that she certainly sees representations of Native peoples as influencing society.¹⁵⁸ In her book she addresses less harmful responses that Indigenous communities can use to counter the current colonization that occurs in the academic setting. Given that her book aims to change society by reclaiming Indigenous research concepts

¹⁵⁴Dorothy Yvonne Grant, “Dorothy Yvonne Grant,” *Dorothy Grant Shop*, dorothygrant.com/artist. (originally accessed 4 May 2011; site now altered and no longer includes cited quote).

¹⁵⁵Mithlo, “A Realist View,” 115.

¹⁵⁶Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 74.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁵⁸Though she problematizes several simplistic reactions to the dehumanizing frame of imperialist acts, Linda Tuhiwai Smith states that representations that influence the colonizer's mentality can be found “structured into language, the economy, social relations and the cultural life of colonial societies.” *Ibid.*, 26.

that have been promoted through traditional western concepts of history and academic and psuedo-academic writing, she might not agree with Mithlo's conclusion that censorship of Native representations is not an option as a method of resistance.

Mithlo's permission to condone images that she acknowledges could be potentially harmful to Native communities can be refuted by an analysis that Andrea Smith provides of queer theory's "subjectless" critique. Like mentalism, the subjectless critique is a post-identity theory that is used to describe communities whose "member/nonmember" boundaries rely on systems that are not as clearly defined as, or are in a larger state of flux than, systems such as race, which are seen by the white queer community as harder from which to step in and out. Smith charges that the use of this theory in queer communities is a method to reinforce white supremacy through its failure to acknowledge queer people of color by stating, "what seems to disappear within queer theory's subjectless critique are settler colonialism and the ongoing genocide of Native peoples."¹⁵⁹

Andrea Smith also challenges the use of subjectless critique in queer communities of color, citing an instance of cultural appropriation by Gayatri Gopinath, who "celebrates the British Punjabi artist Apache Indian's obvious appropriation of Apache culture" in an attempt to create an instance of multiculturalism, by questioning whether the essentialism necessary in the appropriation would always lead to an anti-racist conclusion.¹⁶⁰ Here, too, she argues, the use of the subjectless critique by queer people of color similarly leads to an erasure of colonial and imperial realities. Disappearing from Mithlo's analysis of representation, as she reaches her conclusion, are precisely these realities of continued colonial oppression of Native communities.

Given the very different conclusions of three Native theorists on the effects and uses of

¹⁵⁹ Andrea Smith, "Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, nos. 1-2. (2010): 45.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

essentialism, western researchers must be careful in this study of art and identity to not try to create a definitive list of appropriate and inappropriate practices. All such lists will have exceptions. In addition, such an action would further the western colonial mindset of desiring to quantify Native bodies, objects and thought in a manner so that Native identity can further be controlled.

All in all, the contemporary Alaska Native artists examined above use their art and discussion to convey, based on Mithlo's framework, realist or "soft" realist politics. McNeil, Galanin, Lord and the unnamed Southeast Alaska Native artist interviewed by Bunten all challenge dominant western portrayals of Native culture. Artists Grant and Bob, and the results of Bunn-Marcuse's work on t-shirts show a willingness to remove restrictions on which contexts Native culture can be displayed, while at the same time acknowledging a colonial history of inappropriate possession of Native culture by non-Native, and especially white, people.

While Mithlo's own conclusions on the appropriate response to essentializing representations place her in the company of Grant and Bob, other theorists, such as Andrea Smith and Linda Tuhiwai Smith point out the contradictions of analyses that do not include an examination of colonialism, genocide, imperialism and racism that is often central to Native studies theories.

Part of the history of racial discourse in the United States includes the concept that the current racial status quo can be explained without addressing the topic of historical oppression against people of color. Within this contradiction lies the argument that racism and the effects of racism can be explained through biological or cultural differences and thus are inevitable or the fault of those that experience racism.

In the past five years of the Obama presidency a neoliberal narrative of the achievement

of a post-racial United States has pervaded social discourse,¹⁶¹ perhaps building on the post-racial theoretical work such as the above-mentioned subjectless critique. Though racial theorists have addressed the fallacy of a color-blind society, many white people and a number of people of color have taken the inauguration of a non-white person to the office of president as a validation of their belief that racism exists in the United States only in isolated, unrelated cases.¹⁶² Further, neoliberals often question the wisdom of racial justice activists who promote discussions of race and the history of racism by stating that such discussions only results in a continuation of incidents of racism, as though the mere mention of race can not be raised without incurring or inciting racial injustice.¹⁶³ At the same time, there has been no diminishment in the interest in the identification of who belongs to what racial group, especially regarding Native American peoples. Mainstream media outlets give attention to stories of tribal governmental decisions to remove or deny tribal citizenship and thus, voting rights, shares and benefits from self-identifying Native people with documentation of Native ancestry, framing their stories as examples of discontented, spiteful people fighting amongst themselves. Meanwhile, over the past twenty years, especially with the development of third wave and race-conscious feminism, there has been a growing recognition of a sense of unease that is assumed should be felt by non-Native people, and white people especially, when Native cultural practices are used outside of the context of Native community.

Central to the discussion of cultural appropriation and racial identity politics is the strength and weakness of self-identification as a form of measuring racial identity. Most

¹⁶¹Kai Kohlsdorf, "Policing the Proper Queer: *RuPaul's Drag Race*," *Make/Shift*, no. 14 (2013): 13; Charles Mudede, "Why Black Weirdos are Real and a Postracial Society Is Not," *The Stranger*, 11 December 2013, <http://www.thestranger.com/seattle/why-black-weirdos-are-real-and-a-postracial-society-is-not/Content?oid=18453867>.

¹⁶²Kohlsdorf, "Policing the Proper Queer;" Mudede, "Why Black Weirdos are Real."

¹⁶³Chris Crass, "Off the Cuff: Chris Crass, author, activist and anti-racist organizer," interview, *Oberlin Review*, 14 March 2014, <http://oberlinreview.org/5225/uncategorized/off-the-cuff-chris-crass-author-activist-and-anti-racist-organizer/>; Mithlo, "A Realist View," 107.

politically liberal social science workers have pushed for the use of methodologies that use self-definition when addressing race, and other socially constructed characteristics, as a means to reduce the impact of traditional western social science practices of western anthropologists in grouping Indigenous peoples without giving weight to Indigenous knowledges of identity. This traditional western method relied on the researcher as an outsider looking in and categorizing humans based on the evidence perceived by the researcher. This practice led to many harmful mistakes and, even when mistakes were not made, a disempowerment of the people who were providing research material to the anthropologists. Further, the categories themselves were based on western understandings of human relationships and could not have provided a correct structure of identity. The push for using self-definition in research to categorize identity, then, was a response to this colonial system of research. However, to a certain extent, self-definition is a western capitalist, Protestant concept that relies on the western prioritization of individualism over community priorities. Whether or not self-definition will continue to be useful, or whether it ever has been useful, depends on the development of Indigenous methods of understanding community, individuals and resources. Indigenous communities face the challenge of asking and answering questions based on their own preferences of identifying groups while at the same time developing new Indigenous research methods in the constantly shifting terrain of social constructions, all with limited resources and constant threat of colonial cultural annexation.

The process of self identifying with a racial construct also allows individuals, especially those who receive privileges through their ability to pass as white, as well as those who are white but who interact with others through, for example, the visual art they create, to opt to not present their racial identification while still potentially benefiting from the exoticism with which Tlingit culture is associated in western culture or to not have to experience racism to the extent that people who do not pass as non-white do. Other methods of assigning identity, such as a reliance

on community or historical knowledge, would not permit this absence in the makeup of an individuals' identities. In support of these other methods, Val Napoleon, an Indigenous scholar and member of the Saulteau First Nation, states that Indigenous communities provide more focus on the relationships between members of a community instead the western "paramount relationship ... of the individual to the state."¹⁶⁴ However, reliance on community knowledge allows for potential instances of discrimination and prejudice, which, whether or not they were traditional practices, certainly exist now through learned and imposed western cultural values.

Val Napoleon starts to confront the problem of some types of discrimination through communal racial definition, not through the history of anthropological studies, but through the history of governmental control of Native citizenship. By way of examining how concepts of ethnic and civic nationalism are useful in critiquing the Canadian government's system of organizing First Nations peoples into bands through tiered statuses of Indigeneity as well as how the two types of nationalism frame a debate for differentiation of First Nations groups based on First Nations political theory, she argues that any group organized through racial identity, whether self-defined or communally defined, will not be able to maintain itself. This is because membership in identity-based national communities is based on "pre-existing ethnic characteristics."¹⁶⁵ Though Napoleon spends a little time on white ethnic nationalism, and gives no direct examples of how it influences Canadian politics, for the most part she uses the discussion of ethnic and civic nationalism to critique First Nations bands that have not opened their eligibility requirements to include lower-blood quantum First Nations peoples and First Nations women who choose to marry non-First Nations people. This allows Canadian bands to deny self-identifying First Nations people and First Nations women access to a legally recognized identity that matches their own. Despite the fact that she does not name Canadian white ethnic

¹⁶⁴Val Napoleon, "Extinction by Number," 143.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 137-38.

nationalism as a system within Canadian colonization, she makes it clear that colonial influences are to blame and encourages a discussion of how First Nations thought and philosophy can build on its own forms of civic nationalism for more just membership requirements.¹⁶⁶

As mentioned above by Said, control of identity is a tool that is used by both colonial powers to perpetuate colonial rule and by Indigenous peoples to resist colonial incursion. Since identity is used so often in framing who has legitimate access to resources, Indigenous methods of creating identity have not been recognized by groups and governments that have traditionally used Indigenous lands and culture for profit, except when convenient for non-Indigenous groups to gain political capital with these Indigenous groups and then, only when they can find a method that is least inconvenient to their position. Thus, it is important to recognize Indigenous methods of identity creation and note whether and how they are used to oppose western colonial practices.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 144.

USE OF TLINGIT CULTURE BY NON-TLINGIT INDIVIDUALS: ADOPTION AND PRIVILEGE

Drawing on the themes introduced by the concept of cultural appropriation I compare the instances of use of Tlingit culture by non-Tlingit people raised by the women with whom I interviewed with the theory overviewed in the previous chapter. While there is a certain amount of acceptance, and even encouragement, shown by the people I interviewed of the use of Tlingit culture by non-Tlingit people, that use must be approached with extreme awareness of the history of colonization. This approach is required due to the presence of systemic racism in Sitka. I especially rely on Nancy Marie Mithlo's framework of realist and mentalist ideologies to place the reactions to the examples of cultural use raised by the women with whom I interview in an ideological continuum. In addition to Mithlo's work I introduce Albert Memmi's theory to frame the narratives of struggle over Tlingit identity in a colonial framework. Through the excerpts of the interviews that I present, these struggles take shape through critiques of possessing Tlingit identity and instructing Tlingit people on Tlingit culture, through examples of the importance of Tlingit culture to Tlingit people, through examinations of whiteness and masculinity in access to Tlingit culture, and through the access to increased status in western and Tlingit communities with use of Tlingit culture. I find that Mithlo's binary proves useful until challenged by essentialist notions of identity and culture.

When addressing the topic of non-Tlingit use of Tlingit culture by individuals, almost all of the women with whom I spoke brought up the practice of Tlingit adoption. Tlingit culture has a formalized method of identifying a person within its social and political structure of moiety, clans and families¹⁶⁷ as well as a process called adoption that allows those Tlingit categories of identification to be transferred to non-Tlingit people. Since this method of identifying people is

¹⁶⁷Thomas F. Thornton, "From Clan to Kwáan to Corporation: The Continuing Complex Evolution of Tlingit Political Organization," *Wicazo Sa Review* 17, no. 2 (Autumn, 2002): 169-70.

part of the Tlingit political process and the choice of who to adopt is made by Tlingit people, any exercise of it empowers Tlingit cultural sovereignty and is a demonstration of Tlingit philosophy and reasoning. However, the adoption process does not transfer Tlingit identity. The fact that these identity categories can be transferred while Indigenous identity itself is not provides an opportunity for conflation of these separate constructions by non-Tlingit people who are adopted and by people who desire access to Tlingit knowledge through non-Tlingit adopted people. The power of the process of self-definition, when added to this conflation, allows white people to claim Tlingit identity through their identification with Tlingit social constructions as well as through neglecting to identify as white.

Applying Mithlo's work on realist and mentalist reactions to derogatory representation to the use of Tlingit adoption requires that I extend the theory to the representations performed by the people themselves instead of through the works of art, logos and design that non-Native people might create. Though in most reactions to use of Native culture by non-Native people the Native women artists with whom I interviewed expose Mithlo's lack of distinction between realists who all see a representation's effect on society but disagree as to whether the representation necessarily is itself derogatory, Mithlo's theory is still useful in examinations of potential harm to Native communities when inappropriate use through mentalist ideology is identified.

“Being” Tlingit and telling Tlingits how to be

In some cases, white people, adopted or not, do not even use the conflation of adoptive and racial identities to claim Tlingit identity. In one interview, the woman I spoke with recounted a white person who used the first person pronoun “our” to refer to Tlingit community. She states this person “says 'our people'. And my thought is that, 'your people are not Tlingit, your people are non-Native.’” Through the use of this plural pronoun, this person is either including herself as

a Tlingit person in the makeup of the Tlingit community and claiming Tlingit identity or excluding Tlingit people from the plurality of the pronoun and claiming that people of the Tlingit community themselves are possessed by the white and non-Tlingit people. This use of language is either, at best, presumptive or, if the latter is the case, extremely paternalistic. Though the person is married to a Native person and has Native children and thus could be claiming possession in the sense that Native people are part of this person's family, the statement of the woman with whom I was interviewing shows that she understood the non-Native person's meaning to indicate that the person was claiming Tlingit identity, not claiming white possession of Tlingit people. Whether this is an instance of intentionally self-identifying as Indigenous or an instance of lack of care in choosing the words this person used also seems to be at issue. In our conversation, the woman stated that “I believe that everybody knows that the person is not Native,” indicating that there is some importance to community knowledge regarding a person's racial identity. Her inclusion of the phrase “I believe that” also shows that there is some doubt in her mind as to whether everyone knows this person is not Tlingit. A person just moving to Sitka and hearing this person speak would have only their preconceptions of identifying Native people, which very often are based on stereotypes, and their experience understanding race in the United States on which to base their understanding of this person's race. This is important because knowing the speaker's racial identity gives a hypothetical listener important information regarding how much credibility to give to the speaker when addressing topics relating to race.

As an additional example of how this person claimed Tlingit identity, the woman with whom I was interviewing stated that this person had “liked” a Facebook group that identified her as being Native. She states, “even [on] Facebook [this person] liked 'I like being Native'. I [had] clicked on it and I 'liked' it, but then I [saw that] there are non-Natives on here so I took myself off of it. I want to be on a site that is actually Native and does not just include everybody.”

Perhaps this person had “liked” the group “I like being Native” to support the idea of liking oneself, especially given the historical and current violence used against Native people.

However, the group's title is clear in its emphasis on being Native. In addition, though it might have been a greater burden on the person, this person could have created a group that supported Native sovereignty or promoted Native history instead of claiming Native heritage. This action, in connection with this person's familial association with the Tlingit community, could allow this person to be perceived as Tlingit in the eyes of people who are not familiar with the this person's identity. This statement also shows that, because of this white person's, and other similar non-Native peoples', use of Native identity, some Tlingit people might not feel comfortable expressing their public support for Native pride. This statement, then, shows an example of causation between white people possessing Native culture and the ease with which Native people then perceive they can claim their own identity. This woman's decision not to participate in a group that could potentially resist negative stereotypes in mainstream culture or other forms of racism affects the abilities of the Tlingit community and Native American communities to do anticolonial work.

When first bringing up this person's actions as an example of use of Tlingit culture this woman focused on behavior. She stated, “there are times where it does get [some] elders upset that [this person] doesn't follow the way things are supposed to be. Part of my culture, the way I was brought up, is that you don't butt in when somebody else is talking. You know if you are in a room full of people that you are going to let everybody else speak first.... The person ... can be overpowering. I feel disappointed when people are that way.” Since this person is vocal in Tlingit settings, they could be perceived by the Tlingit people as a person who regularly speaks out on issues. Thus, they are confronted with a white person who claims to be Native and who is vocal enough to speak over Native people themselves. These actions erase Tlingit people by

establishing that anyone can be Tlingit if they so desire and that Tlingit people can be ignored and silenced by white people. This is a form of erasure that can certainly be equated to colonial practices of possession and paternalism.

Albert Memmi, a Tunisian intellectual who grew up under French colonial rule, connects the colonial role of paternalism with violence. Using the voice of a rationalizing colonialist, he writes, “It is in the colonized's own interest that he be excluded from management functions, and that those heavy responsibilities be reserved for the colonizer. Whenever the colonizer adds, in order not to fall prey to anxiety, that the colonized is a wicked, backward person with evil, thievish, somewhat sadistic instincts, he thus justifies his police and his legitimate severity. After all, he must defend himself against the dangerous foolish acts of the irresponsible, and at the same time ... protect the [colonized] against himself.”¹⁶⁸ Since Memmi's statement demonstrates a form of paternalism that exists under overt, *de jure* colonial rule, he refers to the extreme descriptions of the colonized as “wicked, backward” or prone to “evil, thievish, somewhat sadistic instincts.” Since any colonial power existing today operates on a more nuanced level, these extremes will not often arise in regular discourse. Nevertheless, the cited person's tendency to speak over Tlingit people suggest that they believed that they must act in similar ways to Memmi's colonizers and “protect the [colonized] against himself,” by speaking over other Tlingit people and by preventing discussion among Tlingit people. This behavior has the added colonial benefit of protecting white interests by promoting the norm of white voices in topics of Indigenous concern.

Memmi again evokes the paternalism of colonial rule when he uses the narrative of a person coming of age as a metaphor for the pattern of resistance to colonial power by colonized people. He states that the psychology of the colonized begins with the realization that full

¹⁶⁸ Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 82.

citizenship is denied through the system of colonial rule. Memmi theorizes that this realization leads to an apathy toward political processes within the colonial state. Due to the lack of opportunity for political change, this apathy leads the colonized to focus on agency found within traditional cultural structures. To create his metaphor, Memmi describes the paternal structure of parenthood as the paternalistic power of the colonial state. Because of the hegemony of the colonial state, Memmi believes that the youth will have the resources only to rebel against the state and will lack the interest, then, to rebel against their parents. As such, he states, “revolt against ... his family is a wholesome act and an indispensable one for self-achievement.”¹⁶⁹ Memmi predicts that, because of the importance of breaking intergenerational relationships in producing new traditions and culture, the lack of opportunity to rebel against one's family will lead to cultural stagnation, or an institution that is “corseted,” “hardened” and “calcified.”¹⁷⁰ Memmi's reasoning is problematic in that Indigenous traditional cultures could also hold the key to most effectively resisting colonial rule and also in that new culture can certainly be produced, some would argue must be produced, within the context of existing traditions and culture. Despite this, his understanding of the distribution of resources to resist oppression is useful to our discussion of paternalism and colonialism. Memmi concludes that, because of this reliance on traditional culture, the colonizer is then in the position to state “with a now classical euphemism” that they “respect the ways and customs of the colonized.”¹⁷¹ Here, finally, is the demonstration of how a colonial power can use paternalism to go from defending a colonized people from their “evil, thievish” selves to “respecting” the Indigenous cultures while still operating an apartheid state. Further, this quote shows the essential step through which the “respect” of paternalistic colonialism can lead to possession of Indigenous culture and, even, Indigenous identity.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., 97.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., 98.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

A common rationalization of use of Indigenous art and culture by non-Indigenous, especially white, people is that the appropriation of the culture shows the non-Indigenous person's "respect" for the people from whom the non-Indigenous person took the culture. Their argument is that their possession of Indigenous art and culture shows that they care enough to promote its existence in their lives. If white people did not care enough about the culture to take it and preserve it in white institutions, they would argue, it would become obsolete. This argument is flawed in that it assumes that Indigenous communities need white validation to be seen as a worthwhile component of the global community. The argument is also flawed because it does not mention that this use is most often selective in its possession. Instead of non-Indigenous people living Indigenous cultures, they simply live the parts of it that are most convenient or fashionable at the time, leaving the rest as undesirable and often labeling it as backwards or primitive.

One woman with whom I interviewed pointed out this flaw. She stated that there was a difference between the use of Tlingit culture when placed in the context of promoting Tlingit sovereignty and when it lacks that background.

I've seen one or two non-Natives¹⁷² that have been adopted that have made sure to let people know that they are this clan, that they are this and they are that. And they belong to the [Alaska Native] Brotherhood or the [Alaska Native] Sisterhood and they go to this many parties and whatever. I pretty much try not to think about them, but I feel sorry for their clans.... It is the way [they bring] it up: there is pride and there is pride. I'm proud that I'm a mom because I love my kids to death. That is a pride. Then there is [the pride] that I just got the famous purse and paid \$10,000 for it, or I got those fancy high-heeled shoes. That is another kind of pride. They both go under the same name, but they are both

¹⁷²In Sitka, as with the rest of Southeast Alaska, though there are many different populations of non-Native non-white people, including, most notably, Filipin@s and Mexican Latin@s, the term non-Native is often used by Tlingit people to refer to white people.

totally different.

The phrase that clarifies the context of how these non-Native people are using their membership in clans and Native organizations is “[they] have made sure to let people know.” This phrase shows the approach these adopted people use when claiming identity. To “make sure to let people know” tells us these people are choosing to claim Tlingit clan or organizational identity that goes beyond the cultural norms that indicate when other people, Tlingit or non-Tlingit, need to know their clan or organization. It is useful to see that the woman who made this statement did not describe the situation of each occurrence of “making sure to let others know,” as it leaves the degree of intrusion of each event up to the viewer. This allows her to focus on the relationship between the non-Native person and their clan membership instead of creating a distinct line that demarcates appropriate and inappropriate behavior. This reliance on a subjective instead of an objective measure not only is consistent with Indigenous research methodologies, but shows that there is a useful strategy in leaving judgment of each case of Tlingit use of culture by non-Tlingit people up to each person witnessing the event.

The speaker contrasts family relationships with social acceptance gained through fashion and access to money to illustrate proper and improper ways to experience Tlingit pride. Her conclusion is that, because fashion is available to everyone who desires to purchase it to gain a place in society through spending money, it is a more superficial human experience than the uniqueness of a friendship or parent-child relationship. In a way this can translate to the experience white people have as adopted members of a clan. Because white adopted people are still white and have no Tlingit ancestors, their relationship with the clan is based on their friendship with the person who adopts them. Tlingit people have a direct relationship with the clan through the Tlingit tradition of matrilineal clan membership. Though the friendship white

people have with their Tlingit adopters is certainly not as shallow as the social status gained by wearing expensive clothes, this woman's comparison of different types of pride allows us to understand the relationship of adopted white people as less integral to their identity than the relationship that Tlingit people have with the clan into which they were born. Part of this difference in appropriate claim to Native identity may be due to the choice that non-Native people are given of whether or not to accept the offer of being adopted.

Interestingly, the speaker mentions that the primary emotion that she experiences for the clans that have adopted the non-Native people that have misused their allegiance is, instead of anger, sadness at the adopted people themselves. While, as mentioned above, the members of clans have agency in selecting who they chose to adopt, her statement shows that the poor behavior of the non-Tlingit adoptees is seen as a somewhat uncontrollable malady through which clans must persevere. This may be because there is no currently used process to undo adoptions. Her statement of feeling sorry for the clans of the adopted non-Native people, could also be a method of framing the behavior of the non-Native adopted people as pitiable. This frame gives agency to the Tlingit viewer to position themselves as socially proper, while the adopted non-Native people are shown to be misbehaving. While it is useful to position one's community in a socially advantageous place, this woman also speaks using a tone that implies that she is angry with white people's use of Native culture, especially when that use is described as part of a historical pattern. She states:

When I was down south, especially in the seventies and then I think again in the nineties, when it was cool to be Indian, I had so many white people tell me how to be Indian. Not so much anymore. But every couple decades. Every few years, for some reason, it is really cool to be one of us, whether you really are or not. And some of the crap that people come up with just blows me away. They borrow little parts of this and little parts of that,

and put on made up spirituality [that was] thrown into a bowl and thrown out as real. I understand people that are lost. God, I've been lost. But to go about it in that manner, I think some people really are lost and some folks just want to be cool. And ok, go be cool, wear the \$800 shoes, buy the \$10,000 bag, do what you have got to do, but don't take it from where I come from. Don't take it from my heart. Don't take it from my peoples' hearts. [That is] so not acceptable. That is one of the few things that I really never have tolerated.

Though anger is often more easily identified through examining a person's non-verbal actions and interactions with other people, this woman's anger at white people's use of Tlingit culture, as well as their use of other Native cultures, can be seen to be conveyed at the end of the statement through such comments such as “don't take it from my peoples' hearts” and that these peoples' actions are “not acceptable.” Her phrasing recalls the “familiar mix of anger and fear” pointed out by Kadi at the beginning of this chapter as she pursued a tangible and validating cultural experience not controlled by white people. An important part of this woman's narrative is that this use is part of a reoccurring pattern that has gone on, in her experience, for several decades. This history of use makes any anger that she presents more understandable, as it shows her patience with the white population with which, it must be presumed, she has interacted throughout its decades-long cycles of Native cultural appropriation.

Audre Lorde, a Black lesbian feminist theorist, states in her essay “Uses of Anger” that anger is a necessary component of addressing racism, especially when addressing racism from a feminist perspective.¹⁷³ Given that women in western culture are encouraged to suppress emotions or face the consequence of being labeled unstable or hysteric, the use of anger to address racism by women is even more dangerous than when anger is used by men addressing

¹⁷³Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 128.

racism. This woman's statement almost perfectly defines the topic of cultural appropriation, calling the actions that upset her as those that “borrow little parts of this and little parts of that, and put on made up spirituality thrown into a bowl and thrown out as real.” It also puts this borrowing in the context of a historical pattern. Cultural appropriation, as an activist term that recognizes not only the annexation of culture as property, but also requires that the annexation be a continuous process that takes place over enough of a period of time to show that it is institutional in structure, can easily be seen as a type of racism when the culture being used has been developed by a racialized group. Thus, according to Lorde, this woman's anger at white people's use of Tlingit and other Native cultures is not only appropriate, but a necessary component of feminist change.

In her essay, Lorde writes that “anger is a grief of distortions between peers.”¹⁷⁴ This indicates that, for there to be anger, there must be a relationship between those experiencing the racism Lorde writes of and those using racism. The existence of a relationship implies that there is some type of shared experience or belief that the two parties possess. For there to be anger, there must be the expectation that whatever injustice is happening is wrong because one party is not acknowledging a critical truth that all are expected to uphold and that failing to acknowledge that truth is harmful to other people. Anger, then, can not exist when there is no expectation that another person should treat others equally. When this expectation does not exist or if it fails over the course of a relationship then it would seem possible that hate could exist. Lorde makes sure to differentiate the two.¹⁷⁵ The situation of one party failing to expect that another should treat others equally, however, can only occur when the first party is able to dehumanize the second to the extent that any shared experience is negated. According to this logic, Lorde would suggest that anger, as a reaction to the appropriation of Tlingit culture by white people, necessitates that

¹⁷⁴Ibid., 129.

¹⁷⁵Ibid.

there be some non-dehumanizing belief, some expectation that there is potential for a shared understanding of humanness, that Tlingit people hold of white people. This reliance on and understanding of humanity is perhaps what makes cultural appropriation such a particularly difficult aspect of racism for Tlingit and non-Tlingit people to address, as cultural appropriation can involve the use of identity itself and our identity has many parts that are inseparable from our humanity.

One of the more striking statements made by this woman quoted above was that she had had “so many white people tell me how to be Indian.” Though this statement does not show that white people are using Indigenous culture, it does show the extent to which they feel entitled to control how Tlingit culture is expressed as well as to control those who identify as being Indigenous. As stated earlier in this chapter, control of identity is a powerful method of extending hegemonic colonial power over a community. This woman's objection is an excellent example of the work on erasure, noted in chapter three, by Wendy Rose, who cited Vine Deloria, Jr. on Native people being “corrected” by non-Native people. With white people telling Native people how to behave in order to be seen as legitimately Native, white people do not even have to go to the extent of possessing Native identity themselves to possess Native resources. Thus, this control can be seen as a type of second-person use of culture as it has the potential to change Native cultural use through influencing others. In this case, the woman was in the lower forty-eight states and was being told how to be Native in general, not being told how to be specifically Tlingit. However, she also related a story in which, after she had moved to Sitka she was told by a non-Native friend about “my culture, my language, [and] what was acceptable. And I stopped her. I explained to her, that while I appreciate greatly the sentiment behind it, the fact is that nobody who is not Tlingit can ever tell somebody who is how to be that.” Even though this Tlingit woman had spent some time growing up outside of Tlingit communities, she had no

interest in learning from an unsolicited proclamation of Tlingit values from a non-Native person. This comment shows one aspect of how race and racism are experienced in the United States. Part of the reasoning behind being able to know that “nobody who is not Tlingit can ever tell somebody who is how to be that,” even though one has spent significant time outside the Tlingit community is that racism against Native people cannot be experienced by those who are not Native, no matter the degree to which a non-Native person educates themselves. That difference allows Tlingit people who live outside of Southeast Alaska and Canada to be able to claim their right to the Tlingit experience even though they are not part of the Tlingit cultural community. In short, being part of the Tlingit diaspora is also part of the Tlingit experience.

This short narrative was preceded by the statement that the person who had begun telling her about Tlingit culture was adopted into a Tlingit clan. While non-adopted non-Tlingit people certainly do not hold back from lecturing Tlingit people on proper Tlingit comportment, the fact that this person was adopted shows that she already possessed some Tlingit culture. This possession, along with slightly paternalistic reasoning, could have certainly helped her to decide that she was the proper person to tell her friend about Tlingit culture despite her being a non-Native person.

In a similar vein to this woman's experience of being told how to be Tlingit, and to show, as mentioned above, that non-adopted non-Tlingit people do not refrain from lecturing Tlingit people on Tlingit community matters, another woman mentioned that white people will often tell Tlingit people how to organize their community. After a comment on her frequent frustration with white people's behaviors, this woman said

I do feel like people who have higher positions ... I get offended because they come in and are telling us what we need to do as Natives. That we are doing it wrong, or this

would be a better way. And it is like, “My God!” They've been around here for a year and they think they know everything. And I've grown up with [the culture] and have been learning it. And, [despite this,] I know I don't know anything [in comparison with my ancestors and other teachers]. And it is just, it just makes me angry. How can they think they're authorities on us when they don't even know anything?

While these white people and other non-Tlingit people in managerial positions may or may not be adopted into the Tlingit clan system, this person's comment shows that some non-Native people who have “been around for a year” feel qualified to give advice about “what we need to do as Natives.” When this happens, Indigenous solutions to problems are given less of an opportunity to develop. This comment brings up white privilege and the tendency for non-Native people to spend a short amount of time in a place and expect instant community recognition, two topics that are discussed more fully below. The critique of white privilege can be found when the subject of this discussion moved easily from the topic of white people's actions to the topic of “people who have higher positions.” Since white people often are put in positions of power within organizations, the ease with which this person equates white people and people in hierarchical positions of power makes sense. It also demonstrates a need to examine how white privilege contributes to instances of being an “authority” on Native people and on how Native people should conduct their affairs.

In addition, it is not hard to imagine that once a non-Indigenous person is able to tell an Indigenous person how to “be” Indigenous, it is much less of a jump for the non-Indigenous person to claim to be Indigenous themselves. This leads the previous woman interviewed to state that she met white people who thought it was “really cool to be one of us, whether [they] really [were] or not.” Coming from a non-marginalized community and desiring to “be” part of a marginalized community within the same system of oppression shows a disregard for the

seriousness of having to experience oppression. This statement, when paired with the woman's statement that non-Natives would "borrow little parts of this and little parts of that," matches a central aspect of the definition of cultural appropriation of Native culture, especially when the "parts" involved are those that do not immediately demonstrate the harm that white people perpetrate on Native people through racism. If white people borrowed the trauma that Tlingit communities experienced when their homes were bombed by Russian and US naval ships by similarly destroying their homes and living in the cold, wet Southeast Alaska weather without being able to rely on immediate aid,¹⁷⁶ their desire to use Tlingit culture might be considerably lessened.¹⁷⁷ Joanna Kadi illustrates this lessening of interest in her culture in her essay "Moving from cultural appropriation toward ethical cultural connections" by stating "after experiencing so much anti-Arab hatred growing up, I cut myself off from my culture as soon as I could."¹⁷⁸ Kadi shows us that the racial oppression she experienced as a non-white person in the United States was great enough to separate her from the culture with which she had grown up. To only use part of the culture when participating in the complete culture is so painful shows the immense amount of privilege inherent in white appropriation of Indigenous and other non-white cultures.

Dividing a culture into parts also allows the culture to be removed from its cultural context, necessitating that the person appropriating it apply a context that fills this void. This filler context could be of the appropriating person's culture or it could be, to quote the person interviewing with me, a "made up spirituality [that was] thrown into a bowl and thrown out as real." The bowl she refers to implies a cooking metaphor that corresponds to some mixing process that was necessary before the culture could be used and appreciated as "real." This mixing process in turn implies that there were a number of other cultures that were "thrown in" to

¹⁷⁶Reckley, "Angoon Account of Bombardment."

¹⁷⁷See also, though, the term "oppression tourism" in Andrew Potter, *The Authenticity Hoax* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2010), 242.

¹⁷⁸Kadi, *Thinking Class*, 115.

create the final product of, in this case, a spiritual identity. This process recalls the selectivity of the “respect” given to Indigenous cultures mentioned above. Because only certain aspects of an Indigenous culture are embraced through the process of cultural appropriation, there needs to be a context that can allow the user to process the culture into something from which they can benefit. The woman's use of the phrase “thrown in” indicates a disregard for all the cultural material involved, including the Indigenous culture that she addresses. Curiously, the cooking metaphor also revives the debate used in high school social studies textbooks of framing immigrant assimilation in the United States through images of “melting pots” or “mosaics.”¹⁷⁹ Here the mixing bowl of white cultural appropriation of Indigenous and other non-white cultures falls into the “melting pot” category, as the resulting culture has lost its original identity and meaning.

Finally, it is useful to note that, in this statement, this woman also chose the word “borrow” instead of the word with which I had prompted her. Choosing the word “borrowed” instead of “used” allows her to suggest that, in the event that white people find that what they have chosen to possess does not work in the way which they expected or when they are simply tired of possessing the aspect of culture, they are free to “return” the culture as if they had never possessed it in the first place. Importantly, even if an item or cultural idea is borrowed and returned, it can still be available through its potential to be borrowed in the future. The image that this word summons of a repository of culture available to non-Indigenous and, especially, white people can and do access is an excellent example of Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Said's theory of colonial archives,¹⁸⁰ described previously in more detail in chapter three. The use of this word also mirrors this woman's analysis of white use of Native cultures in that the “borrowing” of

¹⁷⁹Joe R. Feagin and Clairece Booher Feagin, *Racial and Ethnic Relations* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 368-370. While Feagin et al. use “mosaic,” my memory of grade school texts continued the people as food metaphor in “melting pot” and used the term “tossed salad.”

¹⁸⁰Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 42-3; Said, *Orientalism*, 39; Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 67.

culture makes that use of culture more like a fad, or the “famous purse,” and less like a more permanent way of life, or the pride a mother has seeing her children grow up.

Names in exodus: the importance of names as family and cultural resources

The mother of this Tlingit woman who identifies the differentiation of respect was white and, therefore, due to the matrilineal culture of clan membership, she had no clan. As an adult she was adopted into a clan and given a Tlingit name by a Tlingit elder with whom she had worked for a number of years. To her, adoption allowed her to become more fully part of the Tlingit community in Sitka and southeast Alaska. She states, “having [the elder] adopt me and finally not being an orphan any more, I have a clan, I have a name--and now I'm working [in] a really basic basic way [to help] my own people. And for once it is my own people. I don't know [if there are] words for that. It is too big for words.” Though she had always identified as Tlingit, being adopted felt to her as if she had been relieved of her status as an orphan. This comment shows the importance and cultural power of the Tlingit community's clan structure. Her description of the change, that “it is too big for words,” shows the legitimacy of Tlingit clans as cultural and political agents in the Tlingit and non-Tlingit communities. Further, she ties her membership in Tlingit clans with her job helping her “own people.” The fact that she mentions her employment in conjunction with her statement on how important adoption has been for her shows that she takes a similar pride in being accepted by the Tlingit community through traditional Tlingit social structures as being able to contribute her labor back to, as she sees it, the same Tlingit community that has honored her.

As a way of bringing her analysis of Tlingit pride and ownership to the point at which it began, this woman states that adoption

is an honor I've been waiting my whole life for. That is not something to brag about. That is not something to be telling people "I'm this, I'm that." That is something you feel. And you respect. You honor. So you know some big name in the tribe? Who cares? Elizabeth Peratrovich is my aunt. Great aunt, but my aunt. I don't go around every February [during Elizabeth Peratrovich Day] saying ... You know? Lord. Have mercy. [I'd be] stealing what she did. You know? You don't steal what somebody else did. You don't do that. I honor what she did. I talk about how I respect her courage, her fierceness, her motherhood.

Here she quite handily connects the topics of family, ownership, identity and pride. She explicitly brings up ownership of cultural production through the use of the word "stealing." By using this word and equating her pride with being adopted with her relationship with Elizabeth Peratrovich and Peratrovich's life work, she is showing that she understands culture to be, at least in this context, something that can be seen as a concept that can be owned, stolen, and given. Her identity as a Tlingit person would temporarily be more secure if she went "telling people" that she was related, however, she recognizes that this method of establishing her identity would be detrimental to Peratrovich's legacy as an activist, and, ultimately, to her own identity as a Tlingit person as well. Despite the fact that her position as an adopted person was gifted to her by an elder instead of being a position that she was born into as a relative of Peratrovich, she understands there to be a similar dynamic of ownership to the value of the culture she has been given. If an adoptee "bragged about" their status as a member of a Tlingit clan, the value of the membership would be lessened for that person. This may be because a person telling others of their relationship appears not to have the community support of other people who now are no longer needed to validate that person's position as a community member. This statement, then, gives some credence to the preference of a type of community identification of members over

self-identification in a group. According to this woman's analysis of pride and ownership, if a person uses self-identification as a method of defining themselves as an adopted member of a clan in a manner, this is seen as bragging and their motive for self-identification can be viewed as an attempt at theft. Because of the history of violence and land appropriation Tlingit people have experienced, non-Native, and especially white, people who use self-identification as a method of "stealing" Tlingit cultural capital, then, can be seen as participants in a continuation of colonial resource acquisition from Indigenous communities.

To help us understand how colonization and theft relate to one another, Memmi, in addition to his insights on colonial relationships, also offers an explanation of the consequences of colonial goods being transferred to colonizers. He begins with the assumption that the reader is familiar with the basic economic reality of colonialism by stating that a colonizer understands moving to a colony as "simply a voyage towards an easier life"¹⁸¹ where "jobs are guaranteed, wages high, careers more rapid and business more profitable."¹⁸² Memmi, interested in the psychology of the encounter between colonizer and colonized, does not dwell on the economics of the situation, but does address the ultimate responsibility of the people who decide to make their lives in the colonies that their countries secure. He accomplishes this by stating that the colonizer "must also understand the origin and significance of this profit ... [The colonizer] realizes that this easy profit is so great only because it is wrested from others."¹⁸³ Memmi's colonizers come to their wealth through the militarized support of empire. While modern colonization within the United States does not often have the overt violence of armies and navies, it operates through the legacy of that violence and the resulting trauma that lives on in Indigenous

¹⁸¹Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 3.

¹⁸²*Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁸³*Ibid.*, 7.

families and communities.¹⁸⁴ In addition, there are less noted violences reserved for colonial subjects that include more brutal policing, denial of health care as well as non-consensual medical practices, denial of education, removal of children, and familial separation. This enforcement of violence against Native peoples allows for non-Native people to more easily accomplish the theft of Native cultural capital, found in the example above of “bragging” about Tlingit clan membership, by putting Native communities' focus on survival through meeting basic human needs instead of the more difficult to explain, and constantly shifting, colonial cultural appropriation.

Removal of the Tlingit culture, though not through the metaphor of theft, was also illustrated through the story of another woman with whom I interviewed. She related that, in the southeast Alaska community in which she partly grew up, the teachers that the school system hired would come primarily from outside the community. As is common¹⁸⁵ with people who hold more prestigious positions within a community, they were adopted into Tlingit clans and given Tlingit names. They then moved on, leaving the community and often leaving Alaska to return to the southern 48 states. This woman, after being interviewed once, shared her thoughts on the interview with a friend. In the second interview, she used this conversation to further her analysis of the use of Tlingit culture by non-Tlingit people. She stated that she got

into a discussion with a friend of mine recently when we went to another village and they were giving out names [during adoptions], they were going over protocol in name giving during a *koo.éex'*. And they were giving a name to one of the SEARHC [Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium] doctors. And I said, “oh, I was just interviewed about this

¹⁸⁴Caskey Russell, “Language, Violence, and Indian Mis-education,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 26, no. 4 (2002): 99-101; Zachary R. Jones, “‘Search for and Destroy’: US Army Relations with Alaska’s Tlingit Indians and the Kake War of 1869,” *Ethnohistory* 60, no. 1 (2013): 2.

¹⁸⁵Confirmed through interview.

recently” and we got into a discussion about how it is taking away from our kids, when they give away our Tlingit names to non-Tlingit people.... It is taking away from our own children, [and] from our children's children. And that they don't really understand the significance of the name, especially if it is a family name that has been passed on and passed on. You know they might have some respect for it in ways, but like, my children don't have Tlingit names yet. And none of my grandchildren do. And neither do his.¹⁸⁶ So, we just talked about how that could possibly take away. I know that everybody is different, that everybody has their own sense of respect and I'm sure [the person] felt honored. But, you know, SEARHC doctors come and go. They'll move on. They'll take part of that with them.

The comment that non-Tlingit people in prestigious positions such as teachers, doctors, lawyers or politicians “come and go” allows us to more easily recognize in Southeast Alaska Memmi's description of a colonial state where the colonizers who come to produce “order” in a “backwards” culture directly benefit from the resources that the land and people provide to them and then leave when other opportunities present themselves. While giving Tlingit names is a method of strengthening Tlingit culture itself by exercising Tlingit politics and traditions, and the choice of who receives a name is most likely always made by a Tlingit person, there is still a sense of loss when a non-Tlingit person receives a Tlingit name and then leaves the community. This woman's original conversation noted that the non-Tlingit teachers that were hired in the village would “[receive] Tlingit names. They only come up to Alaska to get their teaching experience and then they are gone.... They leave with our names. I mean they become really

¹⁸⁶There are many reasons that would explain why these two people's children and the woman's grandchildren do not have Tlingit names. Among them are that names are given at ceremonies that require large amounts of resources and time and that names are often chosen by relatives that are not nearby. I did not ask why it was the case that they did not have names. For my analysis it is enough that they do not have an essential and integral aspect of identity to which all people should have access.

involved in the culture while they are there, they get their Tlingit names and then they leave, and then there goes part of our family's name.” The very fact that is given that enabled them to be chosen to be given a Tlingit name, the fact that “they become really involved in the culture,” is also a classic part of the colonial tourist narrative of experiencing the exotic local culture to the extent that the Native people accept the visitor as one of their own, or even as a leader.¹⁸⁷ This shows that adoptions can play into a non-Native's ideal experience as a traveler interacting with “the other.”

The comment that non-Tlingits “come and go,” combined with the statements that, when they receive a name and leave “they'll take part of that with them” and “then there goes part of our family's name,” again suggests that non-physical cultural structures, such as names, are viewed as possessions that can be “taken” and that can “go,” just as physical cultural objects can be manipulated. This is important because, for the term cultural appropriation to make sense, there must be an understanding of culture as something that can be appropriated, rather than something that, when used, has no effect on those who developed the culture.

Since the possession of Tlingit names can assist, as described above, in the representation of Tlingit people by white people through the assumption of Tlingit identity, Mithlo's theory on images of Native people created by non-Native people can be extended to the use of these names. This woman's reluctance to support the naming and adoption of white people into Tlingit clans is an example of Mithlo's realist sentiment in that it encourages a more protective stance regarding the distribution of Tlingitness to non-Tlingit people. Mithlo's theory of reaction to representations of Native culture holds despite the fact that, in the case of Tlingit adoption, Tlingit people themselves are gifting Tlingit culture to non-Tlingit people. This is because Mithlo's

¹⁸⁷Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 75-76; Haunani-Kay Trask, “‘Lovely Hula Hands’: Corporate Tourism and the Prostitution of Hawaiian Culture,” in *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 144-45; Cole, “White Savior Industrial Complex.”

examples of derogatory use of Native culture include images that Native people themselves have assisted in developing. For example, the agricultural cooperative Land O' Lakes uses the image of a Native woman on her knees offering butter to the viewer.¹⁸⁸ Though this image relies on and perpetuates the Indian Princess trope of sexually available Native women, Ojibwe artist Patrick DesJarlait was one of the people who, since its original creation, had developed it.¹⁸⁹ While DesJarlait's contribution to the image may have made it less objectionable, the realist perspective on Native representation would point out that his involvement also gives the company the ability to refer to the approval of a Native person when it is confronted with criticism by those addressing the harm caused by the continued image of subservient and sexualized Native women.¹⁹⁰

This woman also theorizes that Tlingit children will be most affected by the distribution of Tlingit names to non-Tlingit, and especially white, people by noting that her own children and the children of her friend do not have access to their own culture through naming, one of the most basic methods of constructing identity. This occurs, she points out, while non-Tlingit people, who often are temporary parts of Southeast Alaska communities, are given names that have the potential to help a person understand the history of a people and a region through its own history of being “a family name that has been passed on and passed on.” To be able to do this she draws a distinction between the importance that a Tlingit name can have to a non-Tlingit person in comparison with a Tlingit person, especially a Tlingit child. She states that the non-Tlingit adoptee does not “really understand the significance of the name” while implying that her

¹⁸⁸Mithlo, “A Realist View,” 106; Torgovnick, *Primitive Passions*, 152.

¹⁸⁹Julie Ann Coleman, “Rediscovering a Legacy: The Life and Art of Patrick DesJarlait” (master's thesis, University of New Mexico, 2000), 25. Cited as a personal communication between Coleman and Robert DesJarlait.

¹⁹⁰For further critique of Land O' Lakes imagery, see Wendy Red Star, “An Interview with Wendy Red Star,” ...*might be good*, no. 71, 16 June 2006, a project of Fluent~Collaborative, <http://www.fluentcollab.org/mbg/archived/issue71.htm>.

children would be able to understand that significance because of their ancestral connection to family members who have had the same name. By using the word “really,” she confirms that there is a difference between Tlingit and non-Tlingit ontology. That is, though a non-Tlingit person can respect the name that they are given, the ability to grasp the importance of the name is not within the cultural realm of the person's understanding. The name, therefore, cannot be used to its fullest potential. In a time when there is a certain amount of lip service going toward the deterioration of Tlingit language, and other more quantifiable measurements of culture,¹⁹¹ this woman's analysis of non-Tlingit people possessing Tlingit culture could be useful in providing a method of promoting stronger cultural sovereignty for the Tlingit people.

Underscoring this ontological difference is this woman's the statement that “everybody has their own sense of respect and I'm sure [the person] felt honored.” Here, the woman acknowledges the respect the non-Native doctor could have felt in receiving a Tlingit name while positing that there exists an overall state of difference based on the experiences a person has had. That “everyone has their own sense,” then, is a phrase that points to the profound difference in the possibilities of non-Tlingit understanding of Tlingit culture in contrast with the potential context that a Tlingit understanding of Tlingit culture might produce. This is illustrated through the fact that, though the children of the woman with whom I interviewed did not have Tlingit names, she herself was given a name when she was ten years old. Though she shares her Tlingit name with non-Native people who have received the name through adoption, because she was named after her great great grandmother by her grandfather she states that she feels “a sense of pride” in, and a sense of spiritual connectedness to, her ancestor and her Tlingit community that she does not believe could be equally felt by a person who is not related. Receiving a name from a family member who recognizes similarities between the namesake and the new holder of the

¹⁹¹Russell, “Language, Violence, and Indian Mis-education,” 97; Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer, “Tlingit Speeches for the Removal of Grief,” *Arctic Anthropology* 40, no. 2 (2003): 31.

name can be a powerful method of permitting a person to claim the right to access and participate in a community, especially when that method is a tradition itself.

Herman Davis, the Tlingit clan leader of the Sitka L'uknax̱.ádi, used similar wording to this woman to express concern about the use of adoption and the power of names. In his address on the topic of current problems seen by Tlingit clan leaders at the 2012 Tlingit Clan Conference, he stated that a lot of Tlingit names have been given out to non-Tlingit, and, especially, non-Native people through the traditional adoption process. Davis states that he worries that “after the [adoption] party we don't see them anymore. That name is still wandering around out there.”¹⁹² In Tlingit culture the adoption process requires that the person receiving the name be at a cultural event, here called a party, that the adopting clan is hosting. By stating that the name is “wandering around out there” he both separates the name from the person to whom it was given and ties the Tlingit culture to the traditional geographic space that the Tlingit use. By doing this he can better claim the name as part of his culture. This concept also allows Davis to critique the actions of the non-Native people who receive names but do not continue to be a part of the Tlingit community. He thus frames the Tlingit community as a entity that can give purpose to a person's life. Davis' use of the phrase “out there” also defines the community boundaries. Here, “out there” means not seeing a person “anymore,” which could be defined to be as broad as that person not being in communication with Tlingit people or as narrow as not seeing a person on the street or at community events. Even if the geography of Davis' statement is defined narrowly, his distress can be seen to be caused by the lack of control Tlingit people have over how Tlingit names are being used by non-Native adopted people. This distress illustrates the importance of community-defined identity to Tlingit culture. Davis' statement shows that the identity given through adoption relies not only on a ceremony, or party, but also on community

¹⁹²Herman Davis, “Clan Leaders Presentations,” session 6, *Tlingit Clan Conference*, sixth edition, Sitka, AK, 30 March 2012.

acknowledgement of a person's actions and continued participation in a community. Because western culture focuses more on the state of being adopted and possessing of a Tlingit name and less on the actions of a person, Tlingit elders such as Davis worry about the distribution of their culture in western society. Thus, while western understanding of adoption gives complete reign to the person adopted after they receive a name, Davis' statement hints at an expectation of responsibility to community involvement in exchange for acceptance into a clan.

While the woman with whom I interviewed related the concept of continued responsibility associated with the acquisition of Tlingit names through focusing on how non-Native adopted people, and the names given to them, would leave, Davis focuses on the effect of not knowing what has happened to the names after the people to whom they were given leave. Though the focus is on different parts of a larger process of absence, Davis' statement mirrors the discontent in the statements above through a shared understanding of names leaving the community through adoption of non-Native people. One of the woman with whom I interviewed related yet another example of a lack of awareness to the responsibility attached to possessing a Tlingit name. She notes, "I'd feel bad if the person that got adopted would think that it is great that they got a name for doing nothing, really. But I forget that people don't know that. They'll say 'It is an honor.' And it is like, yeah it is. Hopefully they'll live up to it then. And they will continue to help. Because some people get adopted and they don't ever participate again." Part of being able to "continue to help" and to "participate again" very often involves staying in the community. While this is not the only way to help or participate, it gives a person a better perspective to judge how to act as a community develops. While this woman's hope that adopted people will remain engaged in the community does not carry the assumption that their engagement will be positive, she still hopes that they will demonstrate "honor" to the culture that they have been gifted by making a long-term commitment "to help."

White and masculine privilege in adoptions

Despite the Native preference hiring policy of the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC), most SEARHC doctors are white. Because of the history of the white colonial rule of Russia and the United States, white professionals receive more of the social benefits provided through colonization of Indigenous land and people. Thus, when white people receive Tlingit names or other Tlingit cultural property, white people must carefully define and examine their relationship with the Tlingit community so as to not to further the pattern of colonial social control that white people have maintained over Indigenous peoples. The woman interviewed above gave an exception to her narrative of teachers and doctors that “come and go” through the example of a Japanese exchange teacher who also “dove into the culture” and then left the community. This person, however,

was such a part of us that it wasn't offensive in any way because she had such a respectful way about her.... She was so respectful to the elders that we just accepted her as part of our own. And she still stays in contact with some of the elders.... She is just considered a part of us. Some people do that, and some people just come in all, you know [laughs]: 'I'm going to learn this and I'm going to do this,' not in a very respectful way, and just kind of demanding that we teach them our ways.

In our discussion, the woman agreed with my statement that the teacher “was accepted into that community as an adopted person because she didn't come from the same background [as the] other people do [who come] from the US and have benefited from US colonization in the past.” However, she emphasized her original statement that the teacher was accepted because of her efforts to maintain relationships with the people she had met in the village, especially the elders. My phrasing of the Japanese teacher's identity as someone who “didn't come from the same

background [as the] other people do [who come] from the US and have benefited from US colonization in the past” does not mean that she was agreeing that the teacher was accepted more easily because she was not white: there are, of course, non-white teachers who follow the pattern of “coming and going” described by this woman. However, her agreement with my reference to the difference in the historical privilege provided by colonization between those in the United States in comparison to people in Japan, or some other nation that experienced western colonization, strongly implies a common understanding of colonization between her culture and what she understood of Japanese culture and Japanese history, which, in turn, suggests a reference to the racial privileges that colonization supports. Though she qualified her agreement with additional reasons for the acceptance of this person by the community, her response demonstrates a need for the use of Tlingit culture to be examined through an anticolonial framework, and, perhaps, an analysis that has a critical understanding of white privilege.

To support the connection between this woman's comments and systemic oppressions like racism, her description of teachers “just kind of demanding that we teach them our ways” is a common critique of white privilege by antioppression activists.¹⁹³ While Tlingit people are clearly going to be the best teachers of Tlingit culture, the difference between “demanding” education and accepting education outside of formal educational settings and, perhaps, within the more messy and complicated realm of relationships, is one that, incredibly, does not often register with white people. Antiracist activists argue that white people have been taught to expect an explanation of circumstances or conditions they do not understand in the terms that are familiar to their own experience. If this does not occur, they often label those occurrences backwards or irrational.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³Lindy West, “Quit Fucking Asking Me Questions: A Refresher Course,” *Jezebel.com*, 12 June 2013, <http://jezebel.com/quit-fucking-asking-me-questions-a-refresher-course-512810149>.

¹⁹⁴Elizabeth Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American*

Another woman with whom I interviewed used an example of a non-white non-Tlingit adopted person when describing appropriate behavior by a person adopted into Tlingit culture. While she used this example as a contrast to demonstrate the inappropriate behavior of a white adopted person, she did not use the example to volunteer any direct racial analysis that would clarify that white people who are adopted into Tlingit culture should examine their behavior for colonial or racist actions. Her statement was that, while the white person who was adopted would wear clothing that implied that she was of a prestigious Tlingit class, the non-white adoptee, who was Alaska Native but not Tlingit, would “clarify to people that she is not [Tlingit]. She'll say, 'I just want to let you all know that I'm adopted, I wasn't born Tlingit, but that was one of the first languages that I learned and grew up with.' She acknowledges that fact. Where the other person doesn't.” Because she was Alaska Native, if she had wanted to pass as Tlingit, she could have easily done so. In fact, the woman giving this statement commented that she “always [forgot] that she [was] not Tlingit.” Though there are no statistics kept on the ethnicity of those adopted by Tlingit clans, the vast majority of non-Tlingit adoptees are white. This, perhaps, makes the woman's choice of an example racially conspicuous, and thus useful in our discussion of white privilege. Most likely, however, it was simply because this woman was a close coworker of the woman with whom I discussed non-Tlingit use of culture, and was therefore more easily remembered as an example.

This woman's statement also supports the previous woman's contention that part of the reason the adoptee was accepted into the Tlingit community was the consistent respect she showed for the Tlingit community. She stated that the adoptee would “say 'thank you for letting me be with you.' And of course, we'll say, 'well, thank *you* for being with us. You are helping us a lot.' It is just that different level of ... I think some people just won't ever get it... It is just like

the mentality. It is just there is something missing there.” While the adoptee who was a Japanese exchange teacher showed respect by maintaining her relationship with Tlingit elders and community members for a decade and a half after leaving the village, this person's respect is shown through her humility and concern over proper recognition of identity. Even though the person was raised in Sitka since the age of four, speaking the Tlingit language in a Tlingit family, she still maintains her status within the Tlingit community as that of a guest by thanking the Tlingit people “for letting” her be with them.

In a final reference to white privilege, this woman states that the “mentality” that she refers to is similar to the recent claim that, for the first time, the majority of the population within the region consisting of the current geographical area of US will be non-white. This claim, false because of the non-white status of Native American people and their majority status before U.S. genocide of Native people, is part of the mythology of western colonists entering an empty land that was available for them to use without ethical consideration. The mythology of this claim is central to the “mentality” to which the woman refers and is one of the many privileges that are conferred upon white people who live in the United States. She connects a reference to white privilege with her example of a white person using Tlingit culture, but does not specifically call the “mentality” used a form of white privilege, leaving listeners to judge for themselves the extent to which race influences the behavior of white and non-white people.

It could be argued that the Alaska Native woman who was adopted into Tlingit culture was not as conscientious of Tlingit cultural sovereignty as described, and was simply clarifying her identity as non-Tlingit because of western society's tendency to combine all Indigenous people into a simple, conflated identity. White people, it would be argued, would not have to make these clarifying statements because they would not be misidentified by people with whom they were interacting. This argument, however, does not take into account the many Tlingit

people who are able to pass as white. Because of this, according to the statement given by this woman, white people need to clarify their racial identity just as regularly as the Alaska Native woman does. This is demonstrated by a narrative of another Tlingit woman with whom I interviewed who had a skin tone and hair color that allowed her to pass as white. This woman had entered an Indian Health Service (IHS) clinic in the southern 48 states and was being helped by the staff when a Native woman “just walked in and went right up to the window and was like, ‘I want my prescription right now’” and also said “‘they should help my people first.’” While she noted that the other Native woman might have simply thought that she was from another tribe and that the IHS clinic should be helping Native people enrolled locally, she felt that the woman's actions were most likely linked to her being perceived as white. This woman with whom I spoke knew that she received social benefits from passing as white, stating “I look so white that I don't get the effect, the racism that is based on looks,” but, since she identified as Tlingit, she would assist others in their reading of her racial identity by wearing items that showed Tlingit designs when she was in public. For example, she states “I have occasionally found myself wearing my Native jewelry down south.” She also related an example of a friend of hers in college telling her that she should not benefit from tuition waiver offered by the college that was available to Native people because she “wasn't enough Native.”

This woman also mentioned two reasons she felt more comfortable in Sitka than in the southern forty eight states. The first cause she mentioned is found in the statement “I feel more comfortable [in Alaska] because there are so many Natives who are mixed, so they look white but they are Native, or they are lighter skinned.” The second reason she mentioned was that having family who lived in the area helped others put her identity into context. She states,

I've been gone for twelve years. Now that I'm back it will be easier. Being around and

stuff it will be easier. It was funny, I got my hair cut a week ago, and the lady who was cutting my hair, this Native lady and she was “Do you have family here?” And I said, “yes.” And I told her who my great aunt and uncle were and she says, “Oh, I know her, I know [your great aunt].” She's like, “I give [her] a perm every couple of weeks.” So, it is such a small town. And then to the lady next to me she [mentions that I am the great niece of her customer].

The presence of relatives in the area, along with the size of the communities and the education of the people based on their interaction with what might be a greater number of Native people in the population compared with most places in the lower forty eight states, allowed this woman to feel as if she did not need to publicly display Tlingit jewelry or wear other items that displayed Tlingit designs in order to avoid public challenges to her racial identity.

Because this woman is Tlingit but passes as white, Tlingit symbolism, when worn in public, helps her to pass as Tlingit. This allows her to match her identity with our society's understanding of Nateness and reduces the number of personal attacks on her racial identity. When white people wear items that show Tlingit symbolism, or other Native symbolism, publicly they reduce our society's assumed connection between those symbols and Tlingit identity, making it harder for Tlingit people who pass as white to participate in society without disassociating from their identity and culture. In small communities a person's racial identity may be well enough known that Tlingit people who pass as white do not have to worry about being perceived as non-Native and may, as in this case, feel more comfortable. However, even in small communities, there are always new people coming to town whose racial assumptions may not match the reality of the identities of members of the community. Therefore, non-Native people should present their racial identity in forums where racial issues are discussed, just as the non-Tlingit Alaska Native woman does in the previous example. Though non-Native people who are adopted have a

connection to a clan and thus may feel inclined to publicly represent that connection, they, too, should indicate their racial identity in similar forums, especially when wearing items that display Tlingit symbolism.

While use of Tlingit culture through adoption most likely needs to be examined through the lens of critical race theory, feminist theory, as long as it does not ignore the intersections between gender and race, also can prove useful. One common reason non-Tlingit people are adopted into Tlingit clans is to provide a cultural context for a non-Tlingit person to enter into a marriage with a Tlingit person. While, again, there are no statistics on the demographics surrounding adoption, it seems men are adopted more often than women. One woman with whom I interviewed stated that this might be because men more often hold the positions of power that Tlingit communities focus on more strongly when considering who to adopt. It could also be that more non-Native men, and especially white men, marry Native women than non-Native women marry Native men.¹⁹⁵ Though this woman disputes the claims of feminist theories that do not acknowledge the exotification of masculine as well as feminine genders of non-white people and states that, in the Tlingit community men are exotified to a greater extent than women,¹⁹⁶ when feminist theory is combined with critical race theory and anticolonial theory the result would suggest that this gendered adoption preference has to do with the exotification of Native women by white men.¹⁹⁷ Lee Maracle notes that Native women “have been the object of sexual release for white males whose appetites are too gross for their own delicate women”¹⁹⁸ She

¹⁹⁵Drew Hayden Taylor, *Me Sexy: An Exploration of Native Sex and Sexuality* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2008), 31.

¹⁹⁶For a summary of Indigenous women's critiques of feminism see Verna St. Denis, “Feminism is for Everybody: Aboriginal Women, Feminism and Diversity,” in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, ed. Joyce Green (Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing, 2007), 36-41.

¹⁹⁷Though not mentioning white men specifically, Emily Snyder, Val Napoleon, and John Borrows note that “Indigenous women face as much if not more exploitation than Indigenous men, yet Indigenous women are the ones who are subjected to violence by men, rather than being its perpetrators.” “Gender and Violence: Drawing on Indigenous Legal Resources,” 16.

¹⁹⁸Lee Maracle, *I Am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism* (Vancouver: Press Gang

argues that this desire originates from an understanding of Native people as both dirty and impure, and thus unable to be harmed by sexual violence, as well as mystical and dangerous, and therefore a sexual challenge that could involve non-consensual physical restraint. Since “gross” recalls both a state of uncleanness as well as a Victorian sensibility that does not allow for sex, especially for women, to correspond to pleasure,¹⁹⁹ Maracle suggests that the white men participating in the colonial practice of rape rely on an exotic understanding of Indigenous women to justify their gendered violence. Though his essay focuses more on the sexual exotification of Native men, the writer Drew Hayden Taylor gives an example of the mysticism ascribed to Native women in western society. He states, “I came across an interesting ad on the Net one day, on a site called Aphrodite Recommends: Female Sexuality. It seems there is a substance being marketed out there called, simply, Native Woman.” He then quotes from the ad: “Before the Western World discovered this treasure, the Haida First Peoples of the Queen Charlotte Islands [*sic*], in what is now British Columbia, understood its primal purpose: connecting a woman to her deepest sexual identity.”²⁰⁰ The advertisement that Taylor describes shows the archetype of Native women's sexuality in western culture through several methods. By using the words “discovered” and “treasure,” the focus of the ad is positioned on the rarity and hidden aspects of the substance as well as of the Native peoples themselves. This ad further exotifies Native peoples through its use of the phrase “deepest sexual identity.” The use of the superlative “deepest” demonstrates to the reader can understand that, because the substance is used by Native people, there can be no stronger product available. The power of the product substantiates the claim that the substance would have been well guarded and that, because of this,

Publishers, 1996), 16.

¹⁹⁹John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 77-78. For a summary of theory on Victorian sexual expression, see D'Emilio and Freedman, xii.

²⁰⁰Taylor, *Me Sexy*, 26.

a potential consumer would be well advised to take advantage of the labor of western explorers and adventurers and make a purchase. Finally, Taylor notes that the product itself is marketed as “simply, Native Woman.” By using the word “simply” to describe the choice of naming, Taylor neatly unpacks the assumptions of western culture's exoticized understanding of Indigenous women. That a product purporting to reveal one's “deepest sexual identity” has only to be labeled “Native Women” for western culture to understand its power and purpose shows the extent to which western society believes in the myth of an elusive Native femininity that, if not controlled by white men, will corrupt white society.²⁰¹

Taylor's essay on Native sexuality draws most of its material from the cannon of novels that rely on western society's taboo of white women loving Native men as their main selling point. The white fear of men of color establishing romantic and loving relationships with white women is well established.²⁰² This is especially well-researched with regard to African American men and white masculine control of miscegenation through lynching and other violence.²⁰³ Andrea Smith notes that white men's fears may be well-founded, as it could be based on a reluctant understanding of the effects of their own violence on white women. She states, citing research done by June Namais, that “Between 1675 and 1763, almost 40 percent of women who were taken captive by Native people in New England chose to remain with their captors.”²⁰⁴ As Smith also notes, this is not to say that they were no traditions of violence against women within Native communities, but it does suggest that there was enough of a gendered difference in the two societies that white women found Native communities benign enough to put the energy into

²⁰¹Maracle, *I Am Woman*, 16, 24; Andrea Smith, *Conquest*, 22-23, 79; Jorge Rivas, “Victoria's Secret Sexy Native American Headdress Runway Disaster,” *Colorlines*, 9 November 2012, http://colorlines.com/archives/2012/11/victorias_secret_sexy_native_american_headdress_runway_disaster.html.

²⁰²Feagin and Feagin, *Racial and Ethnic Relations*, 45.

²⁰³Ida B. Wells-Barnett, “Lynch Law in America,” in *Feminist Theory*, eds. Wendy K. Kolmar and Frances Bartkowski (New York: McGraw Hill, 2013), 124; Carla Murphy, “Conservative Texas City Memorializes Wrongfully Convicted Black Man,” *Colorlines*, 27 February 2014, http://colorlines.com/archives/2014/02/conservative_texas_city_memorializes_wrongfully_convicted_black_man.html.

²⁰⁴Andrea Smith, *Conquest*, 20.

adapted to an entirely new culture. While the novels' thrill, then, is in the breaking of that taboo, Taylor notes that white men both fear what the relationships between Native men and white women say about white masculinity and fantasize about relationships between white men and Native women. He notes that, in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Ariel can be seen as an Indigenous feminine spirit who must be controlled to an exacting degree by a white man who is also the most powerful man on the island.²⁰⁵ He also cites Samuel de Champlain's precisely gendered statement to Native people that “our sons shall marry your daughters and henceforth we shall be one people.”²⁰⁶ Even if this was due to an imbalance in the gender in the populations arriving from Europe, the Champlain's statement shows a presumption that Native people, to accomplish the peaceful goal of becoming “one people,” should similarly imbalance the gender of their unpartnered populations. The ultimate example of this fascination, of course, is the story of Haiwatha and John Smith, made popular through countless retellings and adaptations.

The topic of gender came up without prompting regularly in the interviews, especially with regard to gender privilege in marriage. The one other time I raised the subject of exotification of Native women by white men through marriage, she disagreed with the premise that the gender imbalance in marriages between Native people and non-Native people was due to the increased exotification of Native women. She attributed the bias to “just basic physical attraction.” However, she went on to say that perhaps white men partnered more often with Native women because white men traveled more than Native men or white women and thus had more contact with other people, including Native women. She stated, “I think with all the travel that people can make nowadays, and ... in the seventies [men] traveled.... A lot of men traveled for their jobs. And the pipe line up there brought a lot of men up there.” Though we did not discuss it, perhaps, due to our society's preference in hiring white men for most jobs as well as the

²⁰⁵Taylor, *Me Sexy*, 21.

²⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 31.

wage gaps that benefit men and white people, the number of white men traveling for jobs in relation to the number of white women or Native men can be seen as a continuation of the colonial process. If so, then the expectations of those white men traveling to jobs in remote Alaskan communities will rely on their understanding of Native women as exotic as an extension of their travel experience and can be seen as similar to the explorers uncovering previously unknown and perhaps dangerous “treasures.”

White men who marry Tlingit women are sometimes adopted by a Tlingit clan because of their choice to marry a Tlingit woman. The adoption gives them increased access to Tlingit culture, beyond the access they receive from the close relationship they have with a Tlingit person. One woman who interviewed with me noted that, despite adoption and the relationship, the two non-Native men she married persisted in using racism against her. She stated,

I was married to a non-Native and he was very disrespectful of my culture. And I sat him down many times and I said, “You know, when we're at parties if you don't eat, then it is a sign of disrespect.” And he's like “well nobody's going to make me eat what I don't want to eat.” And I said, “Even if you just taste a little bit.” And he's like “No.” And he used very colorful language.... I mean, not only one non-Native I was married to, but two. And it was basically the same thing. I would tell him my beliefs, and he would kind of “yeah right.” And my dad even told him, my last husband, “if [my daughter] is telling you that this is the way it is, then respect that. She is telling you that for a reason. And as your wife, you know, you should try to respect our beliefs and our culture.” And he just didn't get it. He didn't want to get it. And he was adopted by my grandmother into the eagle/wolf clan. And given a name of my grandfather. But it was like he didn't even want to respect that. And it was very hurtful to me that he had so little respect for my culture and my people and the name that he was honored with. To become an eagle was kind of a

big deal to him, but at the same time he didn't really respect it.

The disregard and dismissal of Native culture as unimportant when the culture impinges on the comfort of these men, even when Native culture is a part of their partner's identity and life, weakens the argument for the need for relationships between people as a method of ending racism. This suggests that a willingness to self-critique one's perceptions and uses of another's culture is needed, though this woman offered no suggestions as to how this self-awareness is to be found. Here, possession of Native culture can be seen in the naming and adoption of one of the men. The adoption, she notes, "was kind of a big deal to him," but since "he didn't really respect" the name, the people and the other aspects of the culture, he did not change what can be assumed to be his previous assumptions about Native people and culture. This lack of respect is emphasized in the comment that "He didn't want to get it." This person had seemingly already decided respect of the culture into which he was adopted was not something into which he needed to put energy. This man's desire for adoption combined with his disrespect for other parts of culture again evokes the aspect of cultural appropriation that involves arbitrarily choosing certain parts of a culture to accept and promote while ignoring or demonizing the rest.

White people as teachers and in ceremony: access to status through Tlingit adoption

Because of the adopted man's relationship with the person with whom I interviewed, he was able to acquire a permanent connection with a Tlingit clan, and through that, access to a Tlingit name and other Tlingit cultural effects, while still espousing disdain for numerous central aspects of Tlingit culture. While not all non-Tlingit people who are adopted show this behavior of picking and choosing so openly, the statements given by the women with whom I interviewed show that non-Tlingit people who accept a place within the Tlingit clan system through adoption

sometimes use their position as clan members to further access the portions of Tlingit culture that they desire. When this happens, they potentially enhance their position as Tlingit cultural experts. If they are white in addition to this, they then possess not only Tlingit culture and the label of an expert, but are also in the position to provide more comfortable access to Tlingit culture to other white people. While this access could be seen as a tool to end white racism against Native people, one could also argue that those who are not comfortable with Tlingit culture are those that most need to realize the extent of their discomfort by establishing relationships with Tlingit people directly instead of through a third party. Finally, if non-Tlingit adopted people are seen as experts on Tlingit culture, they may feel obligated to accept roles in Tlingit cultural events that hold greater prominence. This may lead some in the Tlingit community to feel that they are overstepping their place. One woman with whom I spoke mentioned that her mother felt this way about a non-Native adopted person. She stated that this person

is adopted into [a Tlingit clan]. And speaks Tlingit. My mom thinks [that this person] is good and everything, but she thinks [that this person] doesn't have a right to teach Tlingit. And she also thinks that, at clan parties or any funerals and stuff, because [this person] is adopted, [they don't] have a right to speak on behalf of the [the Tlingit clan into which they were adopted]. So she thinks it is not right for [them] to speak up like that. And we don't have very many strong leaders in our clan anymore. So she always tells me that when we see stuff like that when we go to ceremonies or funerals. She says, "[They have] no business talking." My mom says that. And it is like, if you are not raised traditionally, you don't know that. And people pass on wrong ... And you can see it evolving. Things are changing. And it is getting more ... It is not as traditional as it used to be because a lot of people have not been raised, or didn't take the interest and have not learned their culture that well. So you are seeing different changes as it goes on. And elderly people see that

and because they were raised not to be so outspoken like that, they don't say anything.

They just talk to someone in confidence. So, it is like, ok. Mom said [they are] not supposed to be talking, [because they are] non-Native, in important stuff like that.

Though it was this person's mother who held this opinion and not necessarily herself, her mother's stance on this topic was important enough to her and related directly enough to the topic that she thought it would be a useful point to bring up in our conversation. Though this woman's mother's focus on the importance of tradition and the evolution of culture could be seen to indicate a fear of the changes that are happening within Tlingit culture, she brings up these topics to point out the danger of non-Native people pushing too hard to have a place in Tlingit cultural life, as well as to show the difference between the cultural development that happens when non-Native people are part of the process and the development that would happen if they were not there or were not “so outspoken like that.” While the non-Native adopted person may hold extensive knowledge of Tlingit traditions and customs, for the culture to develop as its own entity, the customs must be carried out by those who are a part of the culture. Non-Native people, adopted or not, have their own understandings and expectations regarding universal norms that may not be a part of Tlingit culture. Despite extensive self reflection by the non-Native people, these norms can be broadcast through non-Native people participating in Tlingit ceremonies and thereby change the dynamic of an event. Further, the participation of non-Native people in Tlingit events can demonstrate to the Tlingit people there that non-Native people are better qualified to participate as Tlingit people than even Tlingit people are. This perspective is representative of Mithlo's realist ideology in that this person's mother would have non-Native people removed from any situation that could influence how Native people could be represented, even if it is to mostly Native people that the representation is being projected.

Elizabeth Hutchinson helps illustrate the influence of non-Native people who locate themselves within Native culture by citing Charles Eastman, who observes, “We have been drifting away from our old distinctive art... [O]ur teachers who are white people ... have mixed the different characteristics of the different tribes.”²⁰⁷ While Hutchinson is addressing the conflict between supporting a pan-Indian movement within art and the “conservative approach” supported by Eastman that emphasizes the value of traditional ideas, this statement also shows the influence well-meaning white people have had on Native cultural production and development. Though the white people mentioned by Eastman were surely aware of their mixing of “different characteristics of the different tribes,” they may not have been aware of the extent of the effect that their decision to conflate the tribes had on the art and identity of the people in those tribes. Native people, having experienced the violence of having identities erased and rewritten, would be much more likely to realize the negative results of these actions and would be in a position to more immediately act to change or challenge the direction of cultural evolution had they been in the position of the white people teaching Indigenous art. In the interview above, the woman's mother positions herself on the same side of the debate as Eastman, and challenges the decision to let adopted white people participate in Tlingit cultural events for the same reason Eastman challenges the wisdom of permitting white people to teach Native arts. Unlike the white people Eastman references, most adopted non-Native participants in Tlingit ceremonies are not in formalized teaching roles. However, as speakers at Tlingit clan parties, they have a cultural power similar to teachers and that power magnifies their actions. The non-Native adopted people in Tlingit ceremonies may not be aware of the changes that they effect on the event, or, if they are aware of any modifications that they choose to institute, they may not fully grasp the repercussions that the change may have on the Tlingit community. Further, they are more likely

²⁰⁷Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze*, 218.

to leave the community and not experience any repercussions that their actions may have brought about.

The non-Native person referenced in the quoted statement above is, however, a formal teacher of Tlingit language. Despite the state of diminishment of Tlingit language use, caused especially through the institution of boarding schools in Southeast Alaska,²⁰⁸ the mother of the woman interviewed believes that non-Native people should not be the primary teachers of the Tlingit language learners. Because of the endangered status of the language, this is a powerful statement to the importance of Tlingit control over Tlingit cultural processes and property. The reasoning could be based on the presence of Tlingit language speakers who are available to participate in language teaching but can not be paid as teachers because of their lack of formal teaching qualifications. However, the mother's reaction, that non-Native people do not "have a right to teach Tlingit," emphasizes, through the use of the phrase "have a right," the jurisdiction that non-Native people have access to as teachers when using Tlingit culture. Because of her use of the phrase "have a right," one could imagine her taking issue with non-Tlingit people teaching Tlingit even if traditional Tlingit language speakers were teaching the Tlingit language to the fullest extent possible. This allows us to more easily place her take on the issue within the realm of an anti-colonial critique of non-Native cultural use.

In our second meeting, the person with whom I was interviewing transitioned from citing her mother's stance on the actions adopted people could take to making her own direct statements on the issue. She stated, matching her mother's position, that "at potlatches ... they are not supposed to be allowed to speak on behalf of the clan because they are adopted," and, citing a non-Native person who was speaking at a Tlingit ceremony, that if "a person that is adopted, they are not supposed to stand up and speak [at potlatches]." Importantly, though, she did not

²⁰⁸Russell, "Language, Violence, and Indian Mis-education," 99-100.

differentiate between non-Native adopted people and Native adopted people, and, in a statement before these, recalled that there were a number of non-Tlingit Native people that were adopted. Thus, while she still did not address the issue of non-Native use of culture, she did begin to accept her mother's realist understanding of the issue in the course of our discussions.

This shift is especially notable because this person's general view of the use of Tlingit culture by non-Tlingit people most closely and consistently matched, of all the women I interviewed, Mithlo's description of mentalist ideology. Though she states that culture can be owned, she also indicates that the culture can be used if it is shared. Of non-Tlingit people who do Tlingit beading, she states "A lot of [non-Tlingit] people bead.... [Of these people, one thinks], 'wow, they are just like a natural.' You wonder. And they have the patience and the tenacity to do that. And it is like, 'wow.' It is like, whoever is willing to learn can learn it, is the way I see it. And if the Tlingit are willing to share ...". While she uses the word "learned" instead of a word that indicates use, the statement indicates that one would observe the work of the non-Tlingit people outside the context of them learning it, meaning that their output is being publicly presented in a way that might not show that they are active students of the art form. While she qualifies her statement with the expectation that the use of the Tlingit designs is appropriate because "some of those are generic," she also shows that she believes Tlingit formline design can be appropriately used by non-Tlingit people by immediately stating afterward, "and it is pretty easy to draw your own design if you are artistic." While, like most people, this woman varies between realism and mentalism in different situations depending on what experiences have influenced her, she believes there is a rather broad scope of the potentially appropriate uses of Tlingit culture by non-Tlingit people.

Another example of non-Tlingit people participating in Tlingit ceremony was brought up in an interview with a different woman. She described the importance of Tlingit ceremony and

the importance of the family connections of those participating in prominent roles in the ceremony. Through adoption, the Tlingit names given to non-Tlingit people are sometimes names of other Tlingit people. When this happens the adopted people are in a better position to claim Tlingit ancestry as part of the ceremony, even though they have no Tlingit ancestors. This woman states that these adopted people “go to a party and are selected to dress somebody. And if [they] don't have the lineage, who do [they] say is putting this at.óow, this spiritual robe or hat onto somebody? Because, if the whole practice is acknowledging our ancestors, and you don't have any common ancestors with this person who needs healing ... ” and, “I've seen people who are adopted claim the lineage of the people whose name they got. And if you think about it, it is like, well, what does somebody say?” Even though they “are selected,” which indicates that an outside source, likely a Tlingit person or group of people, asked them to participate in the manner they did, the non-Native person still has the right to refuse the position and the responsibility to understand the actions that the position requires, including claiming relationships with Tlingit people. According to this woman, a non-Tlingit person participating in a part of a ceremony where they must claim Tlingit ancestors possesses a relationship that either does not exist or that belongs to another person. By doing this they are possessing the identity of the Tlingit person with whom they share a name.

This speaker believes that this behavior is disrespectful to both the common ancestors that are claimed by the non-Tlingit adopted person as well as to the person whose identity is appropriated. This is shown through the statement that “the whole practice is acknowledging our ancestors,” meaning that the purpose of the ceremony is to establish community relationships between living Tlingit people as well as between living Tlingit people and Tlingit people who are no longer living. To presume to possess these relationships simply because one was given a name recalls the practice of people who follow New Age pan-humanism culture that, while purporting

to draw on all cultures equally, makes heavy use of North American Indigenous cultures as well as other cultures marginalized and exoticized through colonialism.

As noted above, Tlingit clan lineage is passed to children through their mother. Harold Jacobs, a Tlingit scholar and activist, states that Tlingit identity itself is based on this transfer; that is, since Tlingit culture is matrilineal, if a father is Tlingit and a mother is not, then the child must be adopted into the culture to be considered Tlingit. Since this does not match western understandings of race, where identity can be based on either parent's heritage, and especially those who are not white, Jacobs suggests that, instead of using adoption of non-Tlingit spouses of Tlingit people into clans, adoption should be used more to adopt Native children whose fathers are Tlingit but whose mothers are not Tlingit.²⁰⁹ This idea supports the earlier statement by a woman who interviewed with me who recalled a conversation with a Tlingit man and their realization that neither of their children had Tlingit names. That this realization came up at an event at which non-Native people were being named underscores the importance of Jacobs' statement. His suggestion also demonstrates the process of community determination of identity, as it shows that adoption practices have the potential to shift through debate and discussion. Jacobs' stance also shows the power of Indigenous methods of establishing identity and how those methods can be maintained through the use of Indigenous solutions based on traditional processes.

Some non-Native adopted people use their positions as clan members to decorate themselves with Tlingit symbolism through clothing and accessories. One person with whom I spoke related that she “saw one person who was adopted who commissioned a speaker staff. I think without asking. A speaker staff is for a clan leader.” She went on, in a subsequent interview, stating that “I think the clan leaders saw that and told the person that had adopted him,

²⁰⁹Harold Jacobs, “Name Giving and Adoptions” (presentation, Tlingit Clan Conference, fifth edition, Juneau, AK, 26 March 2009).

'you better go tell him to put that away and not ever bring it out again.' He has absolutely no right to that. And he probably meant well. Who knows. It is really difficult. If a person really wants to be a part of the culture, it is really difficult.” As the speaker noted, the adopted person “probably meant well,” and being part of the Tlingit culture involves a lot of work understanding one's own position in terms of not only adoption into a culture, but one's own race, gender, class and potential other privileges bestowed through societal oppression. While the person with whom I was talking did not specifically mention that the person who commissioned a speaker staff was non-Native, she brought up this example after describing the effects of colonialism on Native people. If this person was non-Native, and understood what he was doing in having a speaker staff created for his use at Tlingit ceremonies, his use of Tlingit culture would be extremely presumptuous. The results of his actions caused the clan leaders of the Tlingit community to have to respond to his improper use of culture instead of working on the production of the event in which they were involved. Interestingly, according to the speaker, they responded to the misbehavior by asking the Tlingit person who adopted the man to talk with him instead of talking with him directly. This shows the reliance the Tlingit community has on the relationships between Tlingit people and the non-Tlingit people who they adopt and highlights the importance of maintaining the relationship long after the adoption.

A similar example of a non-Native adopted person using Tlingit symbolism to position themselves, intentionally or not, at a high level within the Tlingit community occurred through the use of clothing. One woman with whom I interviewed remembered a non-Native person wearing a Tlingit robe that, to her, signified the wearer as a person of high social importance within the Tlingit community. She said, “when I saw [that person] in that fur robe, I said to myself, 'oh my god!' Because even when I was young people were talking about the people of the high crest. Because we are at different levels [or castes]. And for [that person] to wear that.

How can [they] do that? How can people think that is all right? Because I remember hearing that, if you are adopted, you can never be considered that high of level [or caste]. No matter what.” As in the last example, this adopted person may not have been aware that they were placing themselves above other Tlingit people through their choice of wardrobe. However, the robe was of Tlingit design and so they must have known that they were framing themselves some way within the Tlingit community. The outrage apparent in the transcript through the statement and questions of “for [that person] to wear that. How can [they] do that? How can people think that is all right?” reflects not only the harm done when a member associated with the Tlingit community mispositions themselves, but the additional harm done when that person is a non-Native adopted member of the community. This person made this clear by stating at the end of the quoted statement that “if you are adopted, you can never be considered that high of level [or caste].”

Almost all the examples so far discussed have been of people who used Tlingit culture because they were adopted into a Tlingit clan or used Tlingit culture and also happened to be adopted. Since I did not actively pursue the topic of adoption, the fact that it was frequently brought up by all the women with whom I interviewed shows that the use of Tlingit culture while a person is adopted is a significant concern to this group of Tlingit people. There may be an argument that adopted non-Tlingit people are judged to a different metric than non-Native people that are not adopted regarding the proper use of Tlingit culture. A more likely explanation is that the use of Tlingit culture by adopted non-Native people is more likely to be observed and remembered because their use is more likely to occur at Tlingit cultural events. Any of the actions described above, if performed by non-adopted people, would be seen as equally improper by the women with whom I interviewed.

Alternate theory

While Mithlo's binary between realist and mentalist ideologies is useful to frame the politics of appropriate portrayals of Tlingit people by non-Tlingit people through the use of Tlingit culture, one woman theorized that judging the appropriateness of use was itself unhelpful due to the power of defining oneself and one's culture through the exercise of sovereignty. She states, “[non-Tlingit people] could never diminish our culture. Only we can.” Here, she challenges the rhetoric of culture as capital that can be eroded or coopted in a way that might “diminish” the potency of culture and instead grants Tlingit people complete agency in the creation and maintenance of Tlingit culture. To make this argument, however, she must present Tlingit culture as an authentic experience that only Tlingit people may access. That is, by stating that non-Tlingit people cannot affect Tlingit culture, she suggests that the formline designs, language and thought that non-Tlingit people attempt to possess does not make up “true” Tlingit culture and thus any influence that that use contributes to the broader understanding of Tlingitness is not valid.

Going on, and speaking of non-Native people who “just come in and use it to [their] benefit to be cool,” she elaborates, “I see it as really dismissive and arrogant on the part of non-Natives that use it. To me, it is stealing.... That is part of who I am, that is me. Nobody can take away from that, ever. Nobody can damage it or twist it, what is inside of me. But I am absolutely not going to allow somebody to use it in a wrong way, in a disrespectful way. They don't have the right. And I'm pretty good at letting them know.” While still using such words as “stealing” that highlight culture as capital, she frames Tlingit culture as inseparable from her identity by stating that it “is a part of who I am” and that it “is inside of me.” If, as is in this case, her identity is self-determined, she can control the strength of her stake in Tlingit culture merely by stating its importance to her.

Despite the resolution she displays regarding the permanence of Tlingit culture as a part of her identity, she still indicates that it is, and has been, up to her to defend her identity and her culture from inappropriate use. By stating “I am absolutely not going to allow somebody to use it in a wrong way,” she places at least part of the policing of cultural use on herself. Further, she hints that there is a history of instances of inappropriate use by stating “I’m pretty good at letting them know.” While this suggests that there are inappropriate uses of Tlingit culture that could potentially “diminish” the culture unless they are addressed, and thus these statements could allow one to wonder what happens when Tlingit culture is used inappropriately when there are no Tlingit people around to inform the offenders that “they don’t have the right,” these statements could also theorize an critical worldview that bases its belief on the negation of the importance of history that occurs outside of the Tlingit gaze. A reliance on this theory both magnifies the importance of independent Tlingit thought and experience while removing any threat to the integrity of Tlingit culture through unapproved use of culture.

This woman’s alternate understanding of control over cultural integrity in the face of various representations of Tlingit people through the statement “[non-Tlingit people] could never diminish our culture. Only we can,” is echoed by David Katzeek when, at the 2013 Tlingit Clan Conference, he stated that Tlingit culture was strong enough to carry the weight of those non-Tlingit people who were using it.²¹⁰ These pronouncements challenge Mithlo’s binary of realist and mentalist ideologies by both acknowledging the use as potentially problematic while at the same time outright denying any possibility of harm.

Though the women with whom I interviewed are not a representative sample of Tlingit people, Tlingit women, or, even, Tlingit women working in social services, their repeated

²¹⁰Here I paraphrase the statement of David Katzeek in response to “Use of Tlingit Culture by Non-Tlingit People,” presented by David Kreiss-Tomkins (Tlingit Clan Conference, seventh edition, Juneau, AK, 7 November 2013).

references the actions of non-Tlingit adopted people when pressed for examples of inappropriate use by non-Tlingit people of Tlingit culture illustrates the potential impact of adoption on Tlingit cultural sovereignty and access to Tlingit identity. Several comments on the behavior of non-Tlingit adopted people referenced the unproblematic nature of those that “had such a respectful way about” them, and one woman made a point of thanking adoptees who invested their lives in working toward furthering Tlingit cultural education while maintaining and reaffirming their independence from Tlingit identity. However, perhaps due to the method of questioning and my own eagerness to pursue evidence of white privilege, the vast majority of comments on use of Tlingit culture by adopted non-Tlingit people were critical of the adoptee’s behavior. This was especially true when non-Tlingit people claimed, or accepted without proper deference, positions within the Tlingit community or claimed, accidentally or not, Tlingit identity itself.

The practice of Tlingit adoption is, at the very least, based on a relationship between the person being adopted and the clan member who adopts. Often, it involves further relationships, such as adoptions that place romantic or parental relationships between Tlingit and non-Tlingit people in a cultural context. While there is no data on the gender of adopted individuals, the statements of some of the Tlingit women whose non-Tlingit partners were adopted show the added harm introduced into relationships in which non-Tlingit, and, especially, white, men use racist violence based in their access to Tlingit culture through adoption as well as gendered violence against Tlingit women.

Non-Tlingit use of Tlingit regalia, jewelry, designs, and artistic methods were briefly mentioned, usually with more leniency. This perhaps was due to physical objects’ more immediate connection with markets that support Tlingit artists. Use of objects that were deemed “generic” was sometimes not as heavily critiqued, even by those who rely on the symbolism of all Tlingit design, generic or not, to pass as Tlingit. However, use of Tlingit designs, and objects that

have particular cultural meanings, was objected to almost as vehemently as examples of inappropriate use of Tlingit identity by non-Tlingit people.

Finally, while Mithlo's theory of possible responses to harmful representations of Native culture by non-Native people fit well with most examples of use of Tlingit culture by non-Tlingit people, at least one of the women I interviewed expressed some belief in an inextinguishable “true” culture that could not be influenced by outside sources.

There are many overlaps in the anticolonial theory that describes individual and institutional use of Tlingit culture by non-Tlingit entities. I found, however, that separating the two topics was useful in identifying the more impersonal aspects of use of Tlingit culture by organizations and institutions and in clarifying individual responsibility when addressing a person's racial identity.

USE OF TLINGIT CULTURE BY NON-TLINGIT SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS

INCITE!, a national organization of women of color that formed in 2000 and organizes around social justice issues, collectively produced *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, a book defining and addressing the emergence of what they called the non-profit industrial complex. More well-known capitalist complexes, such as the military industrial complex and the prison industrial complex, are often associated with right-of-center politics that support, in the case of the military industrial complex, increasing military spending and foreign policies that rely on high levels of violence. Contributors to the book observed that, while the non-profit industrial complex operated around the same structure as other industrial complexes that had been identified previously by activists, this system was unique in that it was centered within the political left. The left, while not often openly socialist in the United States, has openly embraced non-profits and their accompanying aggressively capitalist funding strategies, such as a reliance on foundation proceeds through their tax-exempt status, as the standard method of achieving social change in their communities. This is useful to our understanding of how cultural appropriation can be used, because INCITE!'s anticapitalist critique of non-profits through the industrial complex theory showed that the use of non-profits by the radical left's liberatory movements had coopted the already hesitant socialist agenda to fit a capitalist, corporate model. INCITE! argued that because non-profits accepted tax-deductible donations, they were subject to the political desires of the foundations that became, as non-profits developed into more professionalized entities, the primary funders of their work. Thus, one of the main movements for social welfare became a political arm of small, wealthy groups of people whose aim was to, at the very least, maintain the security of the vast sums of money within their foundations. Foundation donors were able to modify the politics of a liberatory movement that relied heavily on the historical and current work of socialist activists by pulling funding when the projects

proposed conflicted with the foundations' capitalist goals. Yet, according to INCITE!'s analysis, non-profits were able to maintain the support of the political left through the classist, racist and heterosexist fears of the mostly white, middle class liberals as well as through representations of themselves next to historically revolutionary images and people.²¹¹ If INCITE!'s understanding of non-profit structure is correct, not only must racism, classism and other forms of oppression be addressed within privileged communities, but power behind the process of institutionalization of political imagery and the identity non-profits must be reassessed before non-profits can justify their place in the political left.

Dylan Rodríguez, a contributor to the INCITE! book on non-profits and an ethnic studies scholar, writes that the non-profit system has not only decreased the ability of progressive activists to act on radical ideas but has also limited the imagination of workers who are interested in addressing the social issues that non-profits in the left typically pursue and who would historically produce the progressive ideas upon which the left would then act. He states, “the foundation/state/non-profit nexus ... grounds an epistemology—literally, a way of knowing social change and resistance praxis—that is difficult to escape or rupture.”²¹² Rodríguez writes that this epistemology is based on a white American fear of non-white bodies. This fear allows white people to turn a blind eye to laws and capitalist projects that profit from incarcerating large numbers of African American, Latin@, Native, and Asian people.²¹³ Non-profits, as they are professionalized and funded more and more through foundation and state grants, are encouraged to work with racist and coercive state systems that provide the bodies from which, in turn, capitalist projects and future or current foundations profit. Following this logic, he quite

²¹¹ See also, Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 123-27; Emi Koyama, “Disloyal to Feminism: Abuse of Survivors within the Domestic Violence Shelter System,” in INCITE!, *The Color of Violence*, 208.

²¹² Dylan Rodríguez, “The Political Logic of the Non-Profit Industrial Complex,” in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, ed. INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007), 31.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 26.

accurately describes key aspects of the 2011 Occupy Wall Street movement by positing that future liberatory movements will not rely on non-profit structures, but will be made up of “organized, under-organized, and ad hoc movements of imprisoned, homeless, and undocumented people, as well as activists committed to working beneath and relatively autonomous of the [Non-Profit Industrial Complex]’s political apparatus.”²¹⁴

To better understand how to “rupture” the liberal left’s non-profit-reliant epistemology, Audre Lorde, who on behalf of “those of us who live at the shoreline/standing upon the constant edges of decision/crucial and alone,”²¹⁵ gives an example in the last lines of her often-cited poem, “A Litany for Survival.” She writes, “and when we speak we are afraid/our words will not be heard/nor welcomed/but when we are silent/we are still afraid. So it is better to speak/remembering/we were never meant to survive.”²¹⁶ Lorde’s poetry states that African American people, and others experiencing US imperial oppression, were never meant to be a part of the white American experience beyond the results of the product of their forced labor. As a result of this, their words and bodies are and were made invisible to white America so as to not remind white people of their reliance on a history, and continued implementation, of slavery. This invisibility is comparable to the capitalist epistemology of the liberal left that Rodríguez cites. Likewise, Indigenous people are made invisible to non-Indigenous citizens of the United States so as to not remind them of their reliance on Indigenous land and the genocides that were and are necessary to maintain possession of that land. Indigenous art, then, like Indigenous people, exists in a context that does not allow for complete recognition by non-Indigenous, and especially white, people. As such, Indigenous art can exist as an embodiment of Rodríguez’s radical imagination in his critique of state and foundation cooptation of leftist politics through the

²¹⁴Ibid., 31.

²¹⁵Audre Lorde, *The Black Unicorn* (New York: Norton, 1978), 31.

²¹⁶Ibid., 32.

structure of non-profit bureaucracy.

If Indigenous art created within a colonial, racist environment can be understood as a type of radical imagination, Rodríguez's insight into cooptation of liberatory movements is applicable to the cultural appropriation of Indigenous culture by non-Indigenous organizations. In fact, Rodríguez himself identifies the appropriation of images by liberal non-profits in his essay. He connects this observation to the non-profit industrial complex by stating that

with increasing frequency, we are party (or participant) to a white liberal and “multicultural”/ “people of color” liberal imagination that venerates and even fetishizes the iconography and rhetoric of contemporary Black and Third World liberation movements, and then proceeds to *incorporate* these images and vernaculars into the public presentation of foundation-funded liberal or progressive organizations.... These organizations, in order to protect their non-profit status and marketability to liberal foundations, actively self-police against members' deviations from their essentially reformist agendas, while continuing to appropriate the language and imagery of historical revolutionaries.... These non-profit groups often exhibit(ed) a political practice that is, to appropriate and corrupt a phrase from ... Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *radical in form, but liberal in content*.²¹⁷

Cultural appropriation, then, is one tool those who benefit from the capitalist system within the United States enforce their political ideals over white liberal America in a way that allows for those who hold capital to continue to benefit from the incarceration and labor of young Black and people of color bodies while permitting liberal white people to believe in a world that presents to them as free of systemic colonial and racial violence. While “the iconography and rhetoric of contemporary ... Third World liberation movements” certainly includes Indigenous art, the

²¹⁷Rodríguez, “Political Logic,” 34 (emphasis in the original).

extent to which Indigenous bodies and work are fetishized and venerated allows for non-Indigenous liberal movements to gain benefit from Indigenous “language and imagery” that is not associated with liberation or revolution.

A study on the use of rhetoric in the form of “diversity structures” such as diversity statements and awards for providing good working conditions for marginalized populations supports Rodríguez's claim. Cheryl Kaiser, et al. found that rhetoric that supported the image of a company as diverse not only influenced those reading about the company to believe, despite empirical evidence to the contrary, that the company supported diversity, that those seeking relief from discrimination within such companies were less likely to be justified in their pursuit, and that those who did seek relief from discrimination were trouble-makers or disagreeable.²¹⁸ In this case, then, not only do organizations benefit from the popular support from liberal communities as described by Rodríguez, but they protect themselves from accusations of racism, sexism and other forms of oppression. In their introduction, Kaiser et al. cites further work that “organizations that brand themselves as valuing diversity may be effective in convincing others that they are indeed egalitarian, even if their brand is little more than ‘window dressing.’”²¹⁹

Kaiser et al. demonstrate the influence of a more broad rhetoric of progressive ideology when adopted by institutions, while Rodríguez's essay shows us that organizations, not just individuals, interact with and exploit Indigenous art and identity. Accordingly, in this chapter I will address how non-Tlingit institutions use Tlingit culture in Sitka separately from how non-Tlingit people use Tlingit culture. The women with whom I interviewed in this study repeatedly brought up institutional use of culture as an example of how Tlingit culture is used by non-Tlingit entities. Perhaps this is because it is easier to critique the actions of a faceless institution rather

²¹⁸Cheryl R. Kaiser, et al., “Presumed Fair: Ironic Effects of Organizational Diversity Structures,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 104, no. 3 (2013): 516.

²¹⁹*Ibid.*, 505.

than a particular person. This is especially true in a small town where one is likely to encounter a large percentage of the community at cultural events and through daily errands. They advance theory that explains the use of Tlingit imagery and language by non-Tlingit institutions as a means of framing institutions as progressive, describe non-Tlingit institutional use of Tlingit people within (and absent from) various positions of hierarchy within organizations and their events, relate the influence of non-Tlingit participation in Tlingit organizations founded on western structures and comment on the importance of maintaining the names that Tlingit people place on institutions.

Schools, especially, were brought up as examples of institutions that used Tlingit culture inappropriately. Because the actions and perspectives of adults form, in part, the identities of children; because control of identity is a central aspect of control of culture; and because, outside of families, schools are a major part of adult-child interaction,²²⁰ schools were repeatedly brought up as irresponsible and powerful agents in the portrayal of Tlingit people. Supporting this proposition, Wilson et al. write, echoing Linda Tuhiwai Smith's critique of history as a western tool of colonization, that "attention to identity formation is important in the successful education of all young people but is especially important in the education of colonized indigenous groups such as Hawaiians. Without a means to maintain a strong indigenous identity, young people from colonized groups often develop a culture of opposition to education as a marker of assimilation to the colonizer."²²¹ Parents and other closely involved adults witnessing this opposition can be justifiably sympathetic to this resistance, even when the critique of western-based educational

²²⁰Verna St. Denis, "Feminism is for Everybody," 41-42; Russell, "Language, Violence, and Indian Mis-education," 99.

²²¹William H. Wilson, Keiki Kawai'ae'a and Nāmaka Rawlins, "No ka Ho'ona'auao Kaia'ōlelo Hawai'i: Ma Ke Ki'ina Honua Maui Ola—Hawaiian Language Medium Education: A Honua Maui Ola Perspective," in *Nā Lau Lama Community Report: Part Three, Examples of Culture-Based Educational Programs* (Kamehameha Schools, 2008), http://www.ksbe.edu/spi/PDFS/Reports/Na-Lau-Lama/Chapter%203%20Examples%20of%20Culture%20based%20Ed%20Programs_Final.pdf (accessed 8 October 2013), 60.

methods as harmful are not revealed, especially when they themselves have experienced race-based violence within school systems. This sympathy may be what came through so strongly in the interviews.

Social construction of Nateness in institutional identity

To address how non-Tlingit institutions use Tlingit culture, I must first define what Tlingit and non-Tlingit institutions are. All organizations have identities and histories that are managed through what Rodríguez termed “marketability.” Some of the ways they represent their identities are through their name, logo, the identities of their employees, the identities of their founders, and the highlighted aspects of their histories. In Sitka, there are numerous organizations that are associated with the Native community. Among them are the Indian Health Service hospital Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC), the Sitka Tribe of Alaska (STA), the Sitka Native Education Program (SNEP), the Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB) and Sisterhood (ANS), the former Sheldon Jackson College (SJ), Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS), the Russian orthodox church in southeast Alaska, the regional Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act corporation Sealaska, the Shee Atiká Corporation, Tlingit clans, Tlingit clan houses and families.

Some of these institutions, such as ANB, ANS, SNEP, STA, and the clan system were created by Tlingit people primarily to serve the Tlingit community, though all but the Tlingit clan system and Tlingit house system use western corporate or government models of organization to gain legitimacy and funding to achieve their work. The rest were created by western authorities to address “problems” the western people believed to be connected with Tlingit people. This belief led western governments and civil society to create institutions based on what Shawn Malia Kana'iaupuni calls “deficits-based approaches” that do not acknowledge or make use of the

strengths that a marginalized community possesses and instead promote “interventions” and “systematic reform.”²²² Institutions like SEARHC, as well as educational and religious organizations, were formed to address perceived needs that western society held in relation to Indigenous peoples. Thus, because of a belief that Tlingit peoples, and other Indigenous peoples were dirty, ignorant and lacked in understanding,²²³ the Russian and US government authorities required Tlingit peoples to participate in western systems of health care, education and religious training. The western “deficits-based approaches” that Kana'iaupuni brings up allow western peoples to continue understanding Indigenous peoples as less than human due to their sole focus on the dehumanizing understandings of Indigenous existence. In addition to focusing on problems within the Tlingit community, these institutions created by western authorities join ANB, ANS, SNEP and STA in their use of a western corporate model of organization.

The reason and method upon which an organization is founded is the most essential aspect of the identity of an organization.²²⁴ As institutionalization tends to produce a more conservative, less responsive entity than the movement from which it was sponsored,²²⁵ it is important to understand the politics of the organization when in transition the issue around which the institution is being built to the creation of the organization itself. This process can be clarified when the modern nonprofits' reliance on mission statements is compared with the rejection of a clear demand in the Occupy Wall Street movement. Occupy Wall Street recognized the

²²²Shawn Malia Kana'iaupuni, “Ka'akālai Kū Kanaka: A Call for Strengths-Based Approaches from a Native Hawaiian Perspective,” *Educational Researcher* 34, no. 5 (2005): 35.

²²³Pablo Mitchell, *Coyote Nation: Sexuality, Race and Conquest in Modernizing New Mexico, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 27.

²²⁴See, for the importance of historical context in organizational structure, Richard H. Hall, *Organizations: Structures, Processes, and Outcomes*, 8th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), 104.

²²⁵Ruth Wilson Gilmore, “In the Shadow of the Shadow State,” in INCITE!, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, 45; see example in Perez, “You Can Have My Brown Body and Eat It, Too!” 175; for institutionalization as a solution to unacknowledged power structures see Emi Koyama, “Disloyal to Feminism,” 220 and Carmen Sirianni, “Learning Pluralism: Democracy and Diversity in Feminist Organizations,” in *Critical Studies in Organization and Bureaucracy*, rev. and exp. ed., ed. Frank Fischer and Carmen Sirianni (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 565.

limitations of the corporate structure that non-profits adopted, including the mimicking of corporate goal structures such as mission statements, five year plans, and vision statements, and instead relied on a more flexible dynamic that allowed activists to meet shifting demands by police, the public and corporations while at the same time imaginatively critiquing corporate profit. It would have been much harder for Occupy Wall Street to develop the diverse tactics that the participants employed had they imposed the structural limitations of the corporation on themselves in exchange for being validated by other organizations and the media.

Beth Leonard mentions the importance of the original intent of an organization when she cites the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) website stating that Chief Peter John said that the land the university now occupies was used by the Tanana Athabaskans elders as “a meeting place.”²²⁶ A place “to come to talk and give advice to one another about what they were going to do.”²²⁷ Thus, the University of Alaska is showing the importance of its founding to its identity as a place where people exchanged ideas by reinforcing the narrative that the Indigenous peoples of the area have given about its location. By citing Chief John, UAF also uses the authenticity associated with Indigenous peoples to further support its claim to be a valid institution. Tlingit and non-Tlingit institutions in Sitka similarly rely on the narrative of their founding to shape their identity. The clan and clan house systems, while marginalized by western institutions and people through lack of recognition as legitimate institutions, have the strongest claim to the title of a Tlingit institution in relation to other organizations that are formed by Russian, United States authorities or with western organizational structures, as the Tlingit clans have evolved from the original Tlingit political system.

The presence, proportion and hierarchic position of Indigenous peoples within an

²²⁶Beth *Ginondidoy* Leonard, “Indigenous Pedagogies in the Oral Traditions of Belle Deacon” (draft, September 2013), 5.

²²⁷*Ibid.*

organization also influence the Indigenous identity of an institution. Some of the institutions in Sitka that western governments created, such as SEARHC, Mt. Edgecumbe High School, the Russian Orthodox Church, and Sheldon Jackson College now, or used to, preferentially, or at least intermittently, employ Native peoples and sometimes even place Tlingit people in leadership positions. The ANB, ANS and the Tlingit clans have recruited non-Tlingit people as members, and have sometimes placed those non-Tlingit people at the apex of leadership within the organization.²²⁸

Though non-Tlingit organizations may run the risk of tokenizing Tlingit people when hiring Native staff, Christine Asmar and Susan Page point out that, when examining mainstream academic institutions, the presence of Indigenous peoples in positions of power allows for the organization to more effectively address Indigenous concerns.²²⁹ They also state that “when a non-Indigenous academic is told to Indigenize her curriculum, it is to Indigenous colleagues that she inevitably turns for advice.”²³⁰ While this observation demonstrates the burden Indigenous peoples in non-Indigenous organizations carry due to tokenization, it also suggests that organizations are able to shape their Indigeneity by changing their structures, such as curriculum in schools, and that the presence of Native people within the system as staff or administrators can be useful to non-Indigenous people when they are pressured to make this shift. The presence of non-Tlingit people as members and within the leadership of Tlingit organizations is sure to influence the position the organization takes on Indigenous issues and the comfort non-member Indigenous peoples experience when interacting with the organization, especially when the organization is located within a dominant and majority white community such as Sitka.

²²⁸Confirmed through interview.

²²⁹Christine Asmar and Susan Page, “Sources of Satisfaction and Stress among Indigenous Academic Teachers: Findings from a National Australian Study,” *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 29, no. 3 (2009): 394.

²³⁰*Ibid.*, 387.

Furthermore, each Sitka-based organization highlights certain aspects of its history to make it appear either more or less closely associated with Tlingit culture. In Leonard's example of UAF using its location to reify its identity as an educational organization, UAF also makes a strategic claim to emphasize itself as an organization with Indigenous roots by citing an Indigenous leader. The selection of Chief John's quotation of which UAF makes note includes the narrative of the Athabaskan elders giving the land to the university, though it had already been claimed by the state and the university as the site for construction. This is shown on the UAF website in the passage that states that the Athabaskan elders "decided that the school would be good and would carry on a very similar traditional use of this hill—a place where good thinking and working together would happen. They placed an eagle feather on a pole. This was to let all the people know that the Dena would no longer be using the ridge for a meeting place or to pick wild potatoes."²³¹ Because the university did not first go to the Athabaskan elders to ask for permission to build a physical institution, this example demonstrates UAF's decision to highlight an alternate history that allows UAF to appear as more of an Indigenous institution than its actual history suggests. This disconnect is illustrated by the university's supporting the official naming of the hill upon which it is located back from the unofficial name of University Hill to its original Athabaskan name of Troth Yeddha', while at the same time showing no indication that this change will be accompanied by any student educational requirements that encourage the understanding of the histories of racism and colonialism that have enabled the creation of Alaska, Fairbanks or the university itself.²³²

The decontextualization of this specific history was extended by the university when it began its fall 2012 rebranding campaign "that promotes Alaska as a 'vast, natural laboratory',

²³¹Leonard, "Pedagogies," 4.

²³²Beth *Ginondidoy* Leonard, 17 December 2012, personal communication.

concluding with a reference to "The Last Frontier."²³³ These phrases call attention to Alaska's availability to non-Alaskan, and especially non-Alaska Native, people to achieve their "full potential" by using the representation of Alaska as an empty land full of untouched resources that only need the guiding hand of an individual who has the courage and ingenuity to take a hold of it. Instantly, the university is able to change its image from that which romanticizes the Indigenous roots of its basis for educating the public to making Indigenous people entirely invisible when presenting itself to potential out-of-state students, or in-state non-Alaska Native students.

When the university highlights the recognition by Indigenous leaders of its status as an educational institution, it selectively brings attention to the fact that Indigenous peoples granted the land for their use while at the same time promoting policies and statements that, as noted above invisibilize Native people and thus promote western colonial projects. Though this selective use of Athabaskan culture is an example of institutional cultural appropriation, here it demonstrates the institution's ability to control, through its decision to fund a marketing department, what knowledge can be known and accepted by its readership. This power can be better illustrated by examining how knowledge is socially constructed.

Kana'iaupuni writes about the process of knowledge being constructed to the benefit of western people and institutions. Kana'iaupuni uses the example of western scholars' inability to believe, and thus know, that Native Hawaiians were able to navigate 2200 miles across the Pacific to reach a new land despite detailed Hawaiian narratives on the subject. This skepticism was rooted in their belief that non-western people could not have created specific navigational tools before the western people. Kana'iaupuni states that "science cannot provide a complete basis for human judgment for two reasons, the most basic of which is that human judgment relies on much

²³³Ibid.

more than facts. Equally important, though, is that science can never provide all the facts.”²³⁴

What western society uses to fill in the gaps left by the statements proposed by western science is the trust in the relationships that have been previously established with the people providing us information. When fear of non-white bodies is the basis for part of the relationship with knowledge providers the information provided is resisted. Thus, when western people are confronted with a statement that contradicts their fear of non-western people the statement is put to a much higher standard of testing before it is accepted. Ultimately, then, the process of knowledge construction relies on who controls the process of defining who is human.

When this method of relying on socially accepted norms to construct knowledge is used by institutions to appoint specific Indigenous qualities to the history of the institution, the institution can claim validity as a more Indigenous or non-Indigenous organization. Institutions in Sitka use similar, though perhaps not quite so blatant as those used by UAF to convey entitlement to Athabaskan land, narrative methods to change their institutional histories.

There are other methods of constructing knowledge besides the promotion of Indigenous narratives. One method some of the more wealthy institutions use to construct their identity as Indigenous is to commission major pieces of Tlingit artwork to create an atmosphere that helps align the institution with a presence in the Tlingit community. Also, some non-clan organizations, whether associated with the Tlingit community or not, will create for themselves logos that mimic or are based on the Northwest coast formline design on which Tlingit art, along with the art of other Indigenous nations in the area, is based. Finally, non-clan organizations will apply for, and sometimes receive, Tlingit names in addition to or to replace their western names.

In relation to art installations and logos, Patricia Hill Collins cites Angela Davis'

²³⁴Kana'iaupuni, "Ka'akālai Kū Kanaka: A Call for Strengths-Based Approaches," 32.

statement that “art is special because of its ability to influence feelings as well as knowledge.”²³⁵

While Davis uses this statement to point out how art can act as a focal point around which people may organize to resist oppression, identity can be seen to be created through a similar connection between knowledge and feelings. As mentioned above, identity is created through relationships that a person has with others, especially with those others who are teachers, parents or friends. The empathy that can develop through those relationships influences the knowledge that is gained from previous interactions and creates new knowledge that will influence our subsequent relationships. Davis' statement makes it clear that viewing and participating in art is one of the most powerful ways of re-establishing the relationships that have influenced our ways of knowing and thinking. Institutions that are actively shaping their identity through art harness the power of the feelings associated with that art to affect how people interact with the institution. This is similar to the way that people use fashion, wearable art, makeup and tattoos to influence how other people see them. Institutions are better able to pass as Indigenous or non-Indigenous based on the logos and choices of art that they display.

The importance of naming as a method of constructing knowledge and identity is usually brought up when applied to individuals instead of organizations. Patricia Shaw, however, brings up both when she describes how Canadian boarding schools enforced “the systematic negation of identity” by denying the right of students the use of their own names and the tendency of Canadian organizations to use the term “First Nations” when referring to Indigenous people without understanding the history of the term or the colonialism that western people and the Canadian government have used.²³⁶ The example Shaw brings to her readers of an attempt to manipulate the public perception of an organizations is of a company that advertises that they

²³⁵Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (London: Routledge, 2000), 105.

²³⁶Patricia Shaw, “Language and Identity, Language and the Land,” *BC Studies*, no. 131 (2001): 47

teach the language “First Nations.” Shaw posits that organizations' use of the nonsensical statement illustrates that they are simply plugging in the term that they hear is most current. Shaw writes that “to talk about speaking 'First Nations' reflects an ascendancy of political correctness with respect to the appropriately sanctioned term of reference for this portion of the Canadian population.”²³⁷ Her point is that the ungrammatical use of this term conflates the diverse Indigenous nations within Canada thereby removing the individuality, and thus the humanity, that their peoples can possess.

While Shaw is not speaking of the names of institutions themselves, it is useful that she brings up a relevant critique of institutional use of Indigenous names by non-Indigenous organizations as a method of introducing the importance of names to the identity of individuals. Shaw's observation that non-Indigenous organizations pursue a policy of “political correctness” when interacting with Indigenous communities applies directly to critiques of Indigenous cultural appropriation by non-Indigenous organizations. The appropriation of an Indigenous name by an organization that has little or no Indigenous history can be interpreted as an attempt by the organization to both appear more Indigenous and to appear more responsive to the needs of Indigenous communities regardless of whether their internal policies reflect an understanding of those needs.

Organizations in Sitka take Tlingit names for various reasons. Regardless of the intent in taking a name, the Indigenous names that organizations take, like the names taken by and given to human beings, contribute to an identity that is perceived as Indigenous.

Because western governments rely on deficit theory to such create such “Native” institutions as SEARHC and Sheldon Jackson College, I tend to define of Native institutions as those that are created by and within the Native community and those that maintain a Native

²³⁷Ibid.

leadership. All institutions can influence their position on the range of Native institutional identity by using resources to construct Indigenous histories, images, locations and names. This indicates that the members, reasoning and community that are involved in the founding of an organization and the racial composition of the membership, especially the leadership, of an organization are the most important aspects when measuring the Nativeness of a group of people.

Non-Tlingit institutions, then, are organizations that have little or no Tlingit involvement during their founding, are made up of mostly non-Tlingit people, and have few to no Tlingit people in leadership positions. While it can be useful to define non-Tlingit and Tlingit institutions, doing so can easily lead to the colonial tradition of fetishizing the authentic, “untouched” Indigenous body. To address this concern, the scholarship of those who have done work on Indigenous art history in the US and Alaska can be applied to potential definitions. Publicly presented visual art, like many forms of culture, is closely monitored through cultural norms that have set boundaries that are maintained by museums, galleries and through formal art educational programs in universities. These boundaries are complicated when creators of non-western art begin to define their creations as art, instead of being defined by western institutions as a craft, and thus demand to enter western institutions on an equal footing with western art creators.²³⁸ These changes are useful to examine in the context of organizations given that western society does not legitimate original Tlingit organization, such as clans,²³⁹ and other non-western organizations. However, when they start organizing through western media outlets such as newspapers, western society must begin to acknowledge their existence and thus is confronted with a problem of defining them. Like the boundary between craft and art, Tlingit clans must cross the line between being seen as unorganized, organic groups of people by self-defining

²³⁸Lucy Lippard, “Moving Days,” in *Migrations: New Directions in Native American Art*, ed. Marjorie Devon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 8-10.

²³⁹See, however, Thornton, “From Clan to Kwáan to Corporation,” 188.

themselves as legitimate political organizations through the use of western, often white, organizational recognition. However, also like the difference between craft and art, the Tlingit institutions must make this boundary crossing without losing their authenticity as Native organizations in the eyes of Tlingit and non-Tlingit people. Thus, when I define non-Tlingit institutions, I do so with the qualification that all institutions that claim Nativeness can be found on either side of the border of authenticity, depending on the political context upon which their Nativeness is being challenged or relied.

Despite US Supreme Court rulings in favor of the shared right of free speech between institutions and human beings and the similarity in the continuums of Indigeneity between institutional and personal identity, non-Indigenous institutions that use Indigenous culture are able to facilitate that use in a manner different than the manner that non-Indigenous individuals use Indigenous culture. Western institutions, both profit-based and non-profit, are structured on corporate models that can convey a great deal of protection to the individuals who make decisions that could be seen as contrary to the respectful use of Indigenous culture. While individuals publicly using Indigenous culture can be publicly confronted and made to feel socially uncomfortable if they do not respond to the person confronting them, corporate boards routinely deny transparency into their decision making processes thereby stifling an open dialogue that could address the complexity of cultural ownership and community-based solutions.²⁴⁰

Thus, different strategies must be used to address inappropriate use of Indigenous culture by institutions as opposed to individuals. Because the responsibility for institutional decisions can be hidden and shifted from one person to another within an organization, and because altering systems based on oppression can be more difficult than simply engaging in a conversation explaining historical oppression, changing organizations that are not egregiously appropriating

²⁴⁰Christine E. Ahn, "Democratizing American Philanthropy," in INCITE!, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, 64.

Indigenous culture should be addressed by entire communities, as they can respond to offenses with large amounts of cultural and political resources.

Highlighting multiculturalism: naming as a method of resisting accusations of racism

When institutions that are more non-Indigenous than Indigenous and institutions that have no claim to Indigeneity decide to request an Indigenous name from an organization or person who is seen as Indigenous, instead of simply assigning themselves a name or image, Indigenous communities may have the opportunity to influence the future decisions of the organization by complying with the request. Angela Davis, in her book *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* writes that for Indigenous West African people “the process of nommo—naming things, forces, and modes—is a means of establishing magical (or, in the case of blues, aesthetic) control over the object they are naming.”²⁴¹ This can be seen as an exchange of cultural power for more overt political power. If the Tlingit community believes a non-Tlingit organization that has been given a Tlingit name is behaving in a way that harms Tlingit people, their complaints may have a better chance of being taken seriously by the organization's administration because of the bequeathing of the name. Davis further writes that names, when assigned and used within the Indigenous community, allow Indigenous peoples to construct a new reality around a potential problem that can allow the community to address the problem as a puzzle to be “shared by the community,”²⁴² instead of a force that must be faced individually.

Tlingit names given by the Tlingit community to organizations may be seen as a method of encouraging Tlingit language use. If an organization changes its name to a Tlingit name or incorporates with a Tlingit name, people who refer to that organization must use the Tlingit language or create a new name that is understandable to the people to whom they are speaking.

²⁴¹ Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 33.

²⁴² Ibid.

Sitka Tribal Enterprises (STE), a for-profit part of the local tribal government, Sitka Tribe of Alaska, named its performance venue and community hall the Sheet'ká K̓wáan Naa Kahídi. STE translates this name to English as “the house for the people of Sitka,” but the building is certainly better known in Tlingit than in English. However, the name is often shortened to the “Naa Kahídi” or the “Sheet'ká K̓wáan,” which means the “house of the people” and “The Sitka area,” respectively, despite the fact that a building named “the Sitka area” makes little to no sense grammatically.

This error brings to mind Patricia Shaw's observation of a reliance by non-Indigenous communities on political correctness over critical understandings of relationships.²⁴³ The western people who refer to the building as the Sheet'ká K̓wáan would appear to be more concerned with using the Tlingit language without bothering to think of the meaning behind the words they are using.

Further, sometimes the first modification is translated as “the community house.” The decision to use this translation eliminates the pressure on non-Tlingit speaking people to use the Tlingit language as well as disregards the decision of the Tlingit institution that named the building. However, it also shows that the original name is accepted and is being honored, at least through translation, instead of being completely recreated. Nevertheless, because this type of honoring does not use the Tlingit language name, those who use this term either are avoiding the critical thinking required to understand the difference in historical power between English language speakers and Tlingit speakers in Southeast Alaska or are actively deciding to avoid the language.

The local elementary school was once called Verstovia Elementary School, the name of a Russian-language-named mountain nearby, but it was renamed Keet Gooshi Heen Elementary

²⁴³Shaw, “Language and Identity,” 47.

School in the early 2000s. Since the name change took effect, the school has much more often been referred to by its initials, KGH. In my memory, the school was never previously called VES, but now western people uncomfortable with the Tlingit language, or those who have not thought about the impact of minimizing Tlingit language influence in Sitka, use the initials of the name to refer to the school. While it is not uncommon for schools, especially high schools, and sometimes middle schools, to go by an acronym, the fact that Keet Gooshi Heen Elementary School never previously had a shortened name indicates that the language change in the name influenced the community's decision to accept an alternate, non-Tlingit vocalized reference to the school.

In addition to the Sitka school, an elementary school in Juneau, Alaska, named D'zantiki Heeni in the early 1990s, is frequently shortened to DZ.²⁴⁴ Wayne Holm, a professor at Diné College in Arizona, cited a similar occurrence at a school named Tséhootsooí Diné Bi'Oltá'.²⁴⁵ The name of the school has been shortened in the local vocabulary to TDB. Dan McLaughlin states that this type of avoidance is “insidious.”²⁴⁶ These observations support the theory that Keet Gooshi Heen Elementary School's name is shortened because Sitka residents prefer to avoid unfamiliar languages, even when those languages are native to the area in which they live.

When the administrations of Sitka's school district and of Keet Gooshi Heen Elementary School approached Tlingit institutions regarding the name changing ceremony of the school, they gave the people in those organizations little time to respond to their request that Tlingit groups be involved in the event. One woman with whom I interviewed, a Sitka Native Education Program

²⁴⁴Katie Moritz, “Principal Sees Improvement in Respect of School Name,” *Juneau Empire*, 6 November 2013, <http://juneauempire.com/local/2013-1-06/principal-sees-improvement-respect-school-name#.Uwvr3ePIZgg>.

²⁴⁵Wayne Holm and Dan McLaughlin, “Education for Wellness on the Navajo Nation: A Selective Retrospective [by Two White Guys],” Instructor presentation for course CCS 690. University of Alaska Fairbanks, 9 October 2012.

²⁴⁶Dan McLaughlin, e-mail message to the author, 10 October 2012.

(SNEP) teacher, noted that she thought that the request for a Tlingit name by the school district was done respectfully, but that “we weren't invited until last minute, and that is where I get frustrated, when they'll ask last minute, and it would be so much better to be more prepared.” Though this person was invited eventually, being invited “last minute” is, of course, not respectful. This lack of respect towards Tlingit teachers by the school system, especially when the focus of the interaction between Tlingit and non-Tlingit communities is the supposed respect that the school system is demonstrating, shows the amount of change that still needs to be effected in the institution and the community. This incident highlights the disparity between the publicly performed action of the school system requesting that a school's name be changed to Tlingit and the not-as-public action of the timing of the communication with the relevant people in the Tlingit community.

This woman also used this example to introduce the topic of the amount of energy and importance such naming ceremonies require. She states, though, that many young people within the Tlingit community are not aware of the amount of resources required to produce an event that conveys the importance of giving or changing a name, the ceremonies “used to last three days, if you are going to name a totem pole or if you are going to give somebody a name or somebody has passed away or whatever event has happened, they used to last for [up to] three days and now they are cut down now to a day and some to maybe twelve hours. It is a skeleton of what it used to be.” This general criticism, she states, pertained to the ceremony for the name change at the elementary school. Even though, “they did bring the elders in, they did do the marks and did songs, and they had food out. I just feel that it needs to be emphasized more, that this isn't how it was done traditionally. If it was done traditionally it would have lasted several days at least not just an hour or two.” What if the school system and the elementary school administration had put on a three day event in which regular classes and curricula were postponed and students were

allowed time off in order to best prepare for participating in such an important event as the naming of an entire school? This woman's statement suggests that the school system missed an opportunity to show the importance of Tlingit culture to the Tlingit community, the students, and the non-Tlingit community.

The school district was able to acquire a valuable component of Tlingit cultural property without the major expense and effort that a name would have traditionally cost. The name holds value not only for the Tlingit community but also for the school district. Because of the possession of the name, the school district and the administration at the elementary school are able to state that it is more multicultural institution. The way that the term “multicultural” has been constructed as a term that focuses on inclusion and tolerance instead of justice and critical theory allows the institution to more easily resist accusations of racism, colonialism and cultural imperialism.

Angelina Castagno's tribal critical theory-based case study of a federally-funded Indigenous teacher education program cites Ladson-Billings and Tate to critique inclusion-based social theories, such as the “multiculturalism” referred to above as well as universal human rights. They state that “just as traditional civil rights law is based on a foundation of human rights, the current multicultural paradigm is mired in liberal ideology that offers no radical change in the current order ... We make this observation ... to underscore the difficulty (indeed, impossibility) of maintaining the spirit and intent of justice for the oppressed while simultaneously permitting the hegemonic rule of the oppressor.”²⁴⁷ Castagno's reliance on this work when studying organizational practices and structure shows us that critical understandings of institutions benefit from Indigenous theory. This critical theory encourages us to be open about the limitations of the

²⁴⁷ Angelina Castagno, “They Prepared Me to be a Teacher, But not a Culturally Responsive Navajo Teacher for Navajo Kids’: A Tribal Critical Race Theory Analysis of an Indigenous Teacher Preparation Program,” *Journal of American Indian Education* 51 no.1 (2012): 4.

current social response to the racism and other oppressions that persist in our society. In the case of the Sitka School District, it means that merely changing a school's name is not equivalent to ensuring that teachers, administrators and students abstain from practicing racism against Tlingit people at school.

In this case, cultural appropriation closely matches descriptions of the methods that perpetuate the non-profit industrial complex. Andrea Smith, in the introduction to *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, paraphrases Dylan Rodriguez's above-mentioned work to define the role of the non-profit industrial complex as a structure that “controls dissent by incorporating it into the state apparatus, functioning as a ‘shadow state’ constituted by a network of institutions that do much of what government agencies are supposed to do with tax money in the areas of education and social services.”²⁴⁸ Though the school district is an actual “government agency” that uses tax money to provide local education services, the critique of non-profits is strengthened by this example of a government organization using Tlingit culture by demonstrating non-profits, as the “shadow state,” use the same methods to “control dissent by incorporating it into the state apparatus.” Here, the dissent that is controlled²⁴⁹ is that of the Tlingit families when they challenge the schools district's racism. A map of the structural parallels appears as follows:

<u>Racialized renaming of the school</u>	<u>Structure of non-profit industrial complex</u>
accusations of racism	dissent
appropriated Tlingit culture	incorporation of a network of institutions
school budget	tax money
ending and responding to racism	education and social services

²⁴⁸ Andrea Smith, “Introduction,” in INCITE!, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, 9.

²⁴⁹ See, again, Kaiser, “Presumed Fair: Ironic Effects of Organizational Diversity Structures,” 516.

This example allows us to understand the more abstract concept of an industrial complex as well as equate the institutional appropriation of culture with another, broader system of unequal resource distribution. Tying actions of cultural appropriation to the study of the structure of US non-profits and non-governmental organizations, which, as mentioned above, is really a study of the history of leftist and progressive movements over the last thirty years, allows us to arrive at a more comprehensive view of how the dominant groups in society currently frame the exchange of cultural identity to ultimately consolidate political power over an already marginalized community. This, in turn, allows us to better connect modern use of marginalized cultures with the western history of exotifying non-western peoples. This connection is especially relevant to Sitka, where, like many communities in Southeast, there is a strong non-profit and government-based economy.²⁵⁰ Being able to connect these economies with the racial privilege of denying accusations of racism corresponds to our discussion of appropriation of culture when the use of culture has a real benefit to the non-marginalized culture that incorporates decontextualized aspects of a marginalized culture.

In a final case of naming to be examined here, a Sitka organization that has no Tlingit history or leadership was given a name from the Tlingit community. The organization, started in 2001 as a homecare/eldercare assistance group, was originally called Sitka Faith in Action, a branch of a national group of organizations with a similar name. In 2004 it was given the name Yee Gu.aa Yáx X'wán, which can be translated as “be strong of heart.” In this case, according to the organization website, the idea for the organization to have a Tlingit name originated from within the Tlingit community. A few years after the name was received, the organization adopted the English translation of its Tlingit name as its official name. The organization is now called

²⁵⁰ Social services and health care, two sectors that are closely associated with non-profits and government jobs, are labeled “high-profile industries” in Sitka in the McDowell Group's most recent report on Sitka's economy. McDowell Group, *State of the Sitka Economy 2011* (Juneau, AK) <http://www.sitka.net/downloads/SSE2011Report.pdf>, 8.

Brave Heart Volunteers.²⁵¹ If the organization's website is correct in the idea and process of the name bestowal originating within the Tlingit community, there is little here that can be addressed within the topic of cultural appropriation. While, ultimately, the organization decided not to use its Tlingit name in the original language, the fact that it took the steps to officially drop its original name and adopt the English translation of its Tlingit name shows some initiative and willingness to risk its status as an established organization in a small town. Though this flexibility in naming demonstrates some awareness of colonial histories of oppression in Sitka, especially in the health care industry, a true critical response to its situation would acknowledge fully any internal non-Tlingit effort involved in the acquisition of a Tlingit name, and perhaps would have involved that adoption of the Tlingit name in the Tlingit language.

Though non-Tlingit organizations often demonstrate an eagerness to adopt Tlingit names, their subsequent use of the name, and sometimes the process itself of transferring the name, can be problematic in that the name frames the organization as more racially progressive, and thus less inherently racist, than it was previous to receiving the name. While perhaps internal policies in the organization shift to address any racism or colonial practices that exist within the organization, the emphasis of the change is on the name and the presentation of the organization to the public. As shown by Kaiser et al., rhetoric that makes an organization seem more diverse can not only create a public perception that it is not discriminatory, but can turn public opinion against those that have valid complaints based on incidents of unfairness.²⁵²

Expectations of performance: desire for Native representation through art and bodies

The significance of the amount of involvement of non-Tlingit people in the act of non-

²⁵¹Brave Heart Volunteers, "About our Tlingit Name: Yee Gu.aa Yáx̱ X'wán – 'Be of Brave Heart,'" <http://www.ptialaska.net/~sfia/other/name.html> (now orphaned from main website).

²⁵²Kaiser, et al., "Presumed Fair," 516.

Tlingits receiving Tlingit culture shows the importance of cultural sovereignty and reliance on Tlingit cultural decision making structures when measuring the level of coerciveness in the appropriation of culture. Further, the level of authenticity of the culture produced to satisfy western desire for Tlingit culture is also affected. If a gift of culture is given freely without a request from western participants in the exchange, then Tlingit self-determination is reinforced through the exchange and the ultimate cultural product is of higher Tlingit cultural value. In addition, the act of self-determination in the decision to give culture strengthens the culture as a whole. For example, if a Indigenous community decides to give culture freely instead of being told by non-Indigenous people that they should provide culture, their experience in using and creating Indigenous political tools to conduct such a decision strengthens the community. This strength of community is conveyed to all Indigenous cultural entities, including those that have been given to non-Indigenous people or organizations. This transaction is reminiscent of a cooperative structure in which the production of one member of the cooperative strengthens the success rate of other members of the cooperative because the increased recognition of the work that the first member produced helps the outside community understand the value of the work in general. This leads, theoretically, to increased production for both members.

Yet non-Tlingit organizations regularly ask Tlingit leaders and community members for permission to possess their own aspects of Tlingit culture. One woman with whom I interviewed related a story of having organized to put up totem poles in front of two organizations. She stated that, “after those two poles, or even after the first one, somebody came up to me, another tribal citizen, and said, ‘oh, so-and-so wants to have a totem pole too.’ It is like ... Well, good for them. I think that it can be very amazing, very healing, an incredible way to tell history and stories, but when it is co-opted, yeah, I think it loses a lot.” Her mention of the fact that this request was made “even” after the first totem pole was put up shows us how quickly organizations responded

to this event. Though it was a tribal citizen who approached her, her mention of the person's tribal affinity implies that the organization that was requesting a totem pole was not a Native organization. These two points demonstrate the importance organizations, and especially, non-Native organizations, place on investing in Tlingit cultural capital and let us guess at the urgency they place on pursuing opportunities that are cheap or grant-funded and that allow them to be perceived as more Indigenous by publically displaying large indigenous monuments that can have a greater influence the understanding of the organization's identity within a community.

In addition, this person mentioned that cooptation occurs at the point when an organization asks for a piece of Tlingit culture instead of waiting to receive it from the Tlingit community when the Tlingit community believes the organization best would be able to use it. Further, she confirms that, to her, the value of the culture is diminished when it is requested instead of given without solicitation. Said and Linda Tuhiwai Smith's theory of colonization through archive,²⁵³ then, is not complete when analyzing the problematic nature of appropriating culture. According to this person, not only is it harmful when culture is possessed out of context in western reservoirs of cultures, but also when a request is made to represent an entity with Tlingit culture.²⁵⁴ The value of the possessed culture to the organization that receives it depends on the manner in which it can construct the narrative of its possession in the eyes of the non-Tlingit community in Sitka. This construction may or may not align with the actual history of exchange, but, if the exchange was initiated by the Tlingit community, one would think that the organization would feel a stronger sense of responsibility to relate all aspects of the exchange.

We see, then, that it is the construction of knowledge itself that allows non-Indigenous

²⁵³Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 42-3; Said, *Orientalism*, 39; Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 67.

²⁵⁴For more on the drawbacks to actively requesting access to Indigenous knowledge, see Angayuqaq (Oscar) Kawagley, "On Silence," in *Stop Talking: Indigenous Ways of Teaching and Learning and Difficult Dialogues in Higher Education*, eds. Ilarion (Larry) Mercurieff and Libby Roderick (Anchorage: University of Alaska Anchorage, 2013), 13-15.

organizations to possess aspects of Indigenous culture in ways that devalue the culture that is borrowed. This woman also made note of Sealaska and Shee Atiká, two Native corporations that were created by the United States federal government through the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). She stated,

even just using the word tribal, [for example] I'm a "tribal member shareholder" of Sealaska. I'm a "tribal member shareholder" of Shee Atiká. I think that just by using "tribal member shareholder" for my ownership of shares in a state-created false person may lead people to think that Shee Atiká or Sealaska has anything to do with tribes. And it doesn't. And I actually do think that there are a lot of subtle ways, and I think that people need to take a look at the subtle ways, that federal government, that our own people have been co-opted by western government.

While this is a powerful example of our previous discussion of how the construction of knowledge can influence the Nativeness of an organization's identity, this woman goes further to show how this construction, created to refer to a western governmental organization, also benefits the federal government at the expense of Native people. The corporations created by ANCSA refer to themselves in media spots as "Native" corporations, and are Native in that they were created for Alaska Native peoples. However, they are not Native in that they were created by the US government in exchange for the relinquishment of any title to the land that Alaska Native people claimed. In this sense, these corporations are just like any other corporation. This woman further highlights how these corporations use the power of naming through their choice of language to influence their own image as organizations that are essentially Indigenous. Instead of the members of a corporation being called "shareholders," they are titled as "tribal member shareholders." ANCSA, however, paid no attention to whether potential shareholders were tribal

citizens or not.²⁵⁵ The qualification to receive corporation shares depended on whether and how many of one's ancestors could be confirmed to be Alaska Native.²⁵⁶

The framing of ANCSA corporations as Native permits western people to group the corporations with other western government agencies and non-Indigenous civil society groups that serve Native people. Thus, instead of understanding the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act as proof of Alaska Native peoples' right to the land, the dividends that are the primary benefit of membership in an ANCSA corporation are seen as handouts that are supported by US taxpayers.²⁵⁷ This is a striking misperception given that ANCSA apportioned to Alaska Native people only a tiny portion of the value of the land that was ceded to the US government.²⁵⁸ This is an example of how the systematic construction of knowledge enables US society to habitually place all organizations racialized as Native in a frame of reacting to a perceived deficit.²⁵⁹ Other groups, such as Indian Health Service; American, Russian and Spanish Christianities; and United States and Canadian boarding schools all subscribe to this paradigm by relying on the argument that Indigenous peoples are unable to care for themselves and thus are in need of social reform based on western ideals. Sitka's iterations of these groups are no exception to this theory.

Kana'iaupuni's deficits theory, though he does not mention it, relies heavily on a critical understanding of “the white man's burden,” the idea that western nations were obligated and sometimes overwhelmed by the chore of “civilizing” the non-western world so that “uncivilized” people could approach the benchmark of humanity.²⁶⁰ That the western world constantly constructed and reconstructed this benchmark so as to make the prize unattainable is not

²⁵⁵Thomas R. Berger, *Village Journey* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), 20.

²⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 24.

²⁵⁷Berger, *Village Journey*, 28.

²⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 27.

²⁵⁹Kana'iaupuni, “Ka'akālai Kū Kanaka: A Call for Strengths-Based Approaches,” 32, 35.

²⁶⁰Gretchen Murphy, *Shadowing the White Man's Burden: US Imperialism and the Problem of the Color Line* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 29.

mentioned in the narrative of the myth of the white man's burden, however. This was because the benchmark was not civilization but whiteness. Gretchen Murphy writes that the sentiment of Kipling's poem was critiqued by US anti-imperialists, who found that by its “celebrating whiteness as both explanation and a goal of the civilizing mission” it also “invited reflection on the meaning and definition of whiteness that its fragile and shifting construct could not completely bear.”²⁶¹ Because whiteness was the real standard western nations used to measure the deficit of civilization in Indigenous communities, and because western people controlled the means to define whiteness, western organizations could continue their work “humanizing” non-white people without fear of running out of work in the future. Andrea Smith points this out after summarizing the work of Said and Homi Bhabha that points out that the colonizers must find at least some similarities between themselves and the colonized, or the absolute difference would be an affront to the belief of social superiority held by the colonizers. Equally, though, the people who experience colonization must never achieve an equal social status through the process of colonization or it would be impossible to differentiate them and therefore impossible to benefit from their subjugation. Smith illustrates this point with an example of Cherokee women who were promised an easier life if they complied with assimilation, showing that the assimilation only made colonial control easier to administer.²⁶²

As all the people interviewed in the study have worked in the non-profit field of ending violence against women, one commonality of their input into our discussions on the use of Tlingit culture by non-Tlingit organizations was the use of Tlingit culture by the local domestic violence shelter, Sitkans Against Family Violence (SAFV). SAFV is also my former workplace of five years. Before I left, SAFV was considering accepting a piece of artwork from a Tlingit artist to use as a logo, but the artist died before an acceptable design could be created. Since I left, SAFV

²⁶¹Ibid., 32.

²⁶²Andrea Smith, *Conquest*, 26.

has adopted a logo that appears to be a piece of clip art that is reminiscent of Northwest coast Native design. I asked one woman with whom I interviewed, an employee of SAFV who is critical of the fact that the organization has so few Tlingit board members, whether she thought it was appropriate for the organization to be represented by a logo that could be perceived as Tlingit when there was so little Tlingit presence on the board. She responded by saying, “Well, on the negative end of it, no. No. But at the same time, you think, let's say you ask six [shelter residents] to come up with something, and they happen to be four Natives and two other ethnicity, and we came up with a logo by a Native lady. I'd have to say that I'd be excited about that. Without giving the board a thought. Because I didn't even think about them. Interesting.” At this shelter, as in most of Alaska, Native peoples proportionately far outnumber white people and people of other ethnicities, so this woman's thought experiment that suggests four out of six residents would be Native is not at all unlikely.

This woman's statement shows that the decision of Tlingit people in the shelter to give Tlingit art overrides any history of racism that the organization's highest body has perpetrated. Thus, even if the shelter's logo goes on letterhead used to inform the community of the board's decisions, the fact that shelter residents' self-determination in gifting their design to the shelter is more important than poor decisions by the board or administration. The statement, however, also shows how unimportant the board is to the identity of the organization, at least in the mind of the employee. The employee, despite her recent long involvement in board decisions regarding the administration's treatment of Native employees, did not even think of the board when considering how the Tlingit community would be affected when the shelter adopted a new logo. This may be because, as an employee, she has an intimate understanding of the amount of work done by low-level employees of the shelter and knew that, to a certain extent, the community of Sitka understood the logo to represent the shelter staff more than the board itself. However, that the

board can still use a logo that passes as Tlingit when applying to outside grants and other funding sources that do not have this local knowledge still must be addressed.

John Howard, in his work on queer relationships in the US South, points out that people living in rural communities can resist social oppressions such as intolerance of mixed race relationships and gay sex that are often associated with non-urban settings with “savvy ... methods, and skilled ... machinations.”²⁶³ Though Howard would hesitate to essentialize people living in rural communities, it is also possible that they are able to rely on the lack of anonymity in rural spaces to safeguard their standing as contributing community members when contentious issues arise. In the case of SAFV's board, non-board members may be able to rest assured that any potential wrongdoing in the board's appropriation of the Native images will be associated with the board and not the staff because of the rural nature of the community and the potential for increased understanding of the relationships between members of the board and the staff or residents.

Every year SAFV works to create an event promoting domestic violence awareness month. They present a visual representation of the domestic violence statistics in Sitka in the previous year and ask prominent community members, such as the mayor, to speak about domestic violence at a outdoor, midday event. One woman with whom I interviewed notes that SAFV had made a habit of inviting a Tlingit person to participate in the ceremony by singing a Tlingit-language song. This singer would accompany themselves with a drum. She states SAFV “used to have a few people sing a [Tlingit] mourning song. I thought that was good, to acknowledge it. Because a lot of Native women are survivors too, or still victims. And I think that it is really good to acknowledge the Native community.” While the presence of a Tlingit person using a drum with a Tlingit design on it while singing a song in the Tlingit language

²⁶³ John Howard, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 33.

certainly affects the Nativeness of the proceedings and thus the organization of SAFV as the sponsor of the event, there seems to be a higher level of control felt by this woman over her the way her culture is being represented in comparison with the comfort of the woman previously mentioned with SAFV's use of a Native-like image as the logo of SAFV.

It is troublesome that it seems that the event coordinators chose to represent the Tlingit people with song instead of speech. Of course, it may be that the SAFV staff asked for general participation and the Tlingit person chosen chose to sing a song. People of color are often relegated to provide only a background imagery that can be understood by mostly white audiences as part of the scenery instead of a central part of the event, especially by performing music.²⁶⁴ What if the mayor, who was white at that time, had been asked to deliver his reaction to the existence of violence in the home by song? Her message, however nuanced, may have been lost due to the fact that she was delivering her information in a manner not expected of a white person. That Tlingit people may have been asked to provide a musical interlude instead of requesting a speech shows some reliance on this trope, especially given that there is such a strong Tlingit oratorical tradition.²⁶⁵

In this instance the person who was asked to sing was invited, and could choose to decline the offer if they felt their presence would be more harmful than beneficial to the Tlingit community. Here I assume that the invitation was presented in a respectful fashion, unlike the above example of Keet Gooshi Heen's invitation to the Tlingit cultural teachers for the renaming ceremony of the school. This is because the woman with whom I interviewed here also mentions that she was asked to speak (not to sing) as a survivor of domestic violence. Though she does not state that she was asked to speak as a Tlingit person who was also a survivor of domestic

²⁶⁴Ruth Glasser, *My Music is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and Their New York Communities 1917-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 60; Perez, "You Can Have My Brown Body and Eat it, Too!" 172, 173, and 183-188.

²⁶⁵Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer, "Tlingit Speeches," 31, 32.

violence, she was certain to be aware of the implication of her presence as a speaker on the Nativeness of the event and did not speak of any concerns she had of speaking because of her racial identity.

This use of Tlingit culture by a non-Tlingit organization was an event which had a defined beginning and ending. Unlike the use of a logo, the Tlingit participants at the ceremony could observe how they were being introduced and represented at all times during the ceremony and, in their presence, had agency to address potential problems that they saw. However, because this ceremony was an event put on by a non-Tlingit organization with prominent community members such as the mayor and chief of police, who were, in this case, non-Tlingit people, present, Tlingit participants may have been hesitant to correct wrongs or point out inconsistencies for fear of being labeled a troublemaker.

Finally, it could be argued that the use of culture was, because of the presence of a respectful invitation and presumable lack of coercive political pressure not to point out racism, entirely controlled by the Tlingit people. If this were the case, then this instance of cultural production could not been seen as a use of Tlingit culture by SAFV, even though they are the sponsors of the event and benefit from any images presented during the presentation that might be perceived as multicultural. Instead it would only be seen as a use of culture solely by the Tlingit performer who presents herself as a sovereign entity, or ambassador, within the space created by a non-Tlingit organization. This metaphor of ambassador is enhanced by the specific ceremony by the non-profit of invitation and the introduction of the Tlingit person during the event. The result of this understanding of the presence of a Tlingit person using Tlingit culture at a event organized by a non-Tlingit entity is that the performance of Tlingit culture, when chosen freely by a Tlingit person, is empowering to the Tlingit culture because of its existence in a mostly white space despite the constant racism and colonialism that exists in the broader community.

This metaphor of a Tlingit person performing Tlingit art as an ambassador is reflected in the woman's statement that "it is really good to acknowledge the Native community." The use of the word "acknowledge" suggests that the invitation to a representative of the Tlingit community allows for the denial of the erasure of the Tlingit peoples from non-Tlingit and especially white understanding of the community of Sitka. This representation of communities is the work to which ambassadors are expected to contribute on behalf of one society which is communicating with another. However, the chance that this person was given true "diplomatic immunity," in the sense that she could point out racism without fear of retributions, such as revocations of future invitations or public chastisement, is slight.

This example, containing both the use of Tlingit art and the use of Tlingit bodies as representations of Tlingit peoples, allows us to examine the differences between the two types of representation. While human beings are different from the art they create, at the same time, art is the expression of our identity and experiences. The presence of a human allows for the person to witness and to agree or disagree with the representation of themselves and their culture in a instance of cultural use by people not of that person's culture. Art, especially visual art, does not require the presence of a person to monitor potential harms done to a group of people through misrepresentation. Therefore, the narratives of the creation of works of art, either within the piece or as an accompanying script or other form of context, are necessary in maintaining a healthy relationship between those using art from another culture and the people of the culture whose art is being used.

Many of the women who interviewed with me brought up the importance of having Tlingit people present in an organization. The metaphor of ambassador is useful when examining how Tlingit people are represented in the staff or board of an organization. The presence of a

Tlingit board member or staff, as Asmar and Page point out,²⁶⁶ allows the organization to provide better service towards the Indigenous people who interact with the organization, as one would expect of any institution that made use of ambassadors when interacting with other cultures. However, as stated the previous discussion, the presence of Tlingit people on a board, staff or, especially, a founding group, can affect the Nativeness of the identity of the organization, much as the adoption of Tlingit pieces of art or Tlingit art being used as a logo. When this occurs, non-Native organizations benefit from the increased Nativeness of the organizational image when being examined for racial tolerance or multiculturalism. This analysis of the presence of Native people on non-Native organizations allows us to identify potential tokenization of the Native person within the organization.

One woman who interviewed with me was able to describe this difference in frameworks when she reviewed her experience dealing with a conflict that had arrived before the SAFV board. She stated, “I wanted resolution. I wanted resolution for the Alaska Native people that worked here ... And I don't think that happened. In my opinion, the board does not support that. I think that there [are] words. [They said,] 'We need to get a Native board member.' 'We' who? 'We' me or 'we' you? Because there is a definite division there.” The distinction she makes about who needs a Native board member, “‘We’ me or ‘we’ you?” shows that she doesn't believe that the board's use of the word “we” includes her. By separating the components of first-person plural pronoun of “we” into its comprising pronouns of “you” and “me” she shows that she has a critical understanding of the difference between the implication of wanting a Native person for representation of a Native voice on the board or for the image of the institution as more progressive. She is also using this critique to problematize the race-neutral language that the board uses when referring to themselves: by separating the pronoun into its components she

²⁶⁶Asmar and Page, “Sources of Satisfaction,” 394.

demands the recognition of the whiteness of the board and their reliance on her as a Native person. In a sense, this clarification also shows that she understood the board's statement to effectively be in the passive voice. By questioning identity of the subject of the sentence, she translates the intent of the strength of their statement into a sentence that might read more as "A Native board member needs to be gotten." Either way, her request for clarification suggests that the board could use more careful and human rhetoric when addressing race. While this woman believed that, had there been a Native person on the board, her experience would have been less traumatic, she also had definite ideas about who that person should be. Despite her belief that a Native person on the board would have assisted her case, she realized that the reason that the board may have stated that they needed "to get" a Native person on their board was not necessarily because they were thinking of how to best address the racism that she was trying to confront and the resolution that she wished to achieve.

Both the examples of the Tlingit singer as an ambassador and the potential Tlingit board member as a representative partly rely on an understanding of Native bodies in public spaces that provides a rationale for their presence. When the context for their presence is not provided, their status as ambassadors or representatives is put in jeopardy. For example, though a participant at the event would have witnessed the introduction of the singer and would have then been informed of the context of an ideally equal exchange between cultures, a person passing by the outdoor space of the function would perhaps expect to see a Tlingit person singing instead on giving an exposition of the degree to which violence against women exists in Sitka. When this happens, Native bodies are converted into objects that are to be examined by the white or non-Native people around them. This analysis relies on Said's orientalist critique of western culture, mentioned in previous chapters, and is also brought forward by Pablo Mitchell's work on race and sexuality in early New Mexico. Mitchell used an example of a Navajo woman who was

particularly noted in the local newspaper to have fallen off a streetcar. While Mitchell was pointing out that the description of the woman's fall off the streetcar, described as “the transit of Venus,” focused on the woman's body to make clear the racial incorrectness of her presence in the community and the gender inconformity of her misstep,²⁶⁷ his analysis also shows that this event was hardly newsworthy outside that fact that the newspaper was able to entertain its mostly non-Native readership with an example of the actions that were available for viewing in the city. The newspaper Mitchell refers to provided a context for readers to understand the presence of Native women in public that perpetuated the understanding of non-white people in public spaces as either invisible or objects of intense scrutiny. The Tlingit singer and the hypothetical board member, despite their consent to appear in a prominent public setting, are also examples of non-Native objectification of Native bodies. In addition, the presence of a Tlingit song sung by a Tlingit person at the domestic violence shelter function allows white people to reify an understanding of non-white bodies in public places as sites of entertainment,²⁶⁸ much like the Native body of the woman on the bus was used to amuse newspaper readers.

In a contrasting example of Tlingit people as ambassadors, one woman recounted how she felt as a Tlingit person in a workplace which was almost entirely Tlingit. She stated “I'm fifty two years old. This is the first time in my entire life that I have ever [gone] to work and been in the majority. This is the first time in my whole life that I understand [my employers]. The thought processes, a lot of the speech patterns and everything are very comfortable to me. I don't have to tiptoe about who or what I am. And I have been working my entire life. To have that right now is so huge I can't even tell you.” This statement suggests that when primarily white organizations attempt to influence their image by inviting Tlingit people to present at events that feature primarily white people, there is a price that Tlingit people must pay when representing

²⁶⁷Mitchell, *Coyote Nation*, 85.

²⁶⁸Perez, “You Can Have My Brown Body and Eat It, Too!” 183-88.

their community. This burden is evidenced in the relief expressed in this woman's discovery of finding herself in the majority for once. This statement also illustrates the value to non-white people of the number of other non-white people in the identity of an organization. Organizations that are primarily comprised of Tlingit people are more likely to be considered Tlingit organizations, especially if the upper levels of the administration and service-providing jobs are staffed by Tlingit people.

During the course of this interview this woman also realized that, until recently, she, a child of Tlingit-white parentage in a time when mixed-race families were openly frowned upon, had lived with a majority of white people her entire life. That this had not occurred to her until the conversation exposes the hegemony of whiteness in the lives of people of color and Indigenous peoples. If I stretch the definition of the organization to include the institution of the family as a type of organization, then it can be seen that, in the context of this revelation and the relief that the woman found in knowing a new framework for understanding her family relationships and childhood, the pressure that organizations can put on people of color to be both present and invisible so as to allow for the identity of the family to be understood as white. While organizations that have a solid stake in whiteness can benefit from superficial investment in Tlingit cultural imagery, organizations that are associated too closely with Tlingit bodies are seen as a threat to white society and thus must be controlled. This social control, then, can be used by white members of the family to limit the access non-white members of the family have to a positive, validating presence in the community.

Expendable culture: generic and superficial art

While Mitchell points out how Native women's bodies are used for entertainment, a number of Native artists have focused on the examination of Native bodies for educational

pursuits. As mentioned in chapter three, Erica Lord, James Luna, and Guillermo Gómez-Peña have all created works that have highlighted white desire to view Indigenous bodies in controlled, safe environments. Lucy Lippard reminds us that this has been a long-lasting desire when she notes that Native people were collected, or, as she states, “captured,” and placed in anthropological museums for public display and education.²⁶⁹ Luna, describing his piece of art that involves placing his body in display in a natural history museum, states that he hopes that his having placed his body as a work of art in a setting that has dehumanized Native bodies in the name of science will increase the “affinity” he sees between art audiences and Native audiences who see his work.²⁷⁰ Luna’s statement again demonstrates the importance of context to the person viewing Native bodies. Certainly many people viewing his body may not have recognized it as a artistic and political work, not realizing that a living body inside an anthropological museum could be anything other than another anthropological study. Those who did likely grasped its significance by drawing from contextual clues, including those of anticolonial activist histories that recognize Native bodies as sites of power and resistance. Luna’s statement on affinities between audiences reminds us that even those understanding the installation as a piece of art still could view it as apolitical, especially if they do not come from a Native background.

The use of the metaphor of ambassador above referred to the use of Tlingit culture in the form of a Tlingit person when the presence of that individual can be perceived to influence the identity of an organization. As presented above, the effectiveness of this use depends on the agency the organization gives the individual through the ceremonies of invitation and the freedom to act and react with respect to the organization without fear of reprisal. When a non-Tlingit organization itself takes the role of ambassadorship the result is more problematic.

One of the examples that I used to initiate discussions of organizational use of Tlingit

²⁶⁹Lucy Lippard, *Mixed Blessings*, 211.

²⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 198.

culture was the distribution by Alaska Airlines of a circular northwest coast Native design on its napkins. Using a grounded theory approach of describing only what I knew about the napkins as a passenger of Alaska Airlines, I asked the women with whom I interviewed what their views were of this use of culture. Given that a passenger on Alaska Airlines receives a napkin and recognizes the design as Native or northwest coast Native, a passenger would most likely infer that the design belongs to the largest of the three northwest coast Native nations in Alaska, the Tlingit. The design appears without any creator's signature or any contextual reference except its use by Alaska Airlines. This use of Native culture, which could likely be perceived as Tlingit culture, is an example of organizational use of an aspect of Native culture to remind its passengers that they are traveling on an airline that serves Alaska Native ancestral land and communities. It thus either acts as an ambassador to its non-Alaska Native clients who are traveling to Alaska, or provides a means to remind non-Alaska Native people of the mysterious qualities that Alaska Native land Alaska Native culture, and Alaska Native bodies provide for non-Native people in hopes that non-Alaska Native people will then attempt to quench their curiosity by purchasing a trip to Alaska via the airlines.²⁷¹ One way to approach this question is to use the only other piece of contextual evidence that is given in this example, that is, that the design appears on a disposable napkin that is widely distributed, as Alaska Airlines passes out this napkin with every beverage and snack it provides to passengers.

While the mass production and distribution of napkins could be a demonstration of respect for northwest coast Alaska Native land and culture, the fact that the design is produced on a medium that is intended to be soiled and disposed of suggests that the napkins are not meant to venerate Tlingit culture but more as a method of allowing passengers to briefly sample Tlingit culture. That is, they would experience the Tlingit culture by possessing it briefly through the

²⁷¹For an summary of theory on white desire of non-white bodies and travel, see Perez, "You Can Have My Brown Body and Eat it, Too!" 176-179.

purchase of a trip to Alaska and then discarding it, or perhaps keeping it as a souvenir.

This interpretation is strengthened by a recently aborted practice of distributing glossy cards of a bible passage accompanied by the image of a sunset viewed from a plane. If the airlines had had the resources to produce these tastefully designed pieces of paper that had no practical purpose then they certainly had the resources to produce a tastefully designed Tlingit, or other Alaska Native, piece of art that would better help passengers understand the importance of the original people of the land after which the airline was named to the financial health of the company.

While this analysis was not discussed in full with every woman with whom I interviewed, all the women had flown Alaska Airlines and had experienced receiving these napkins and, because I based this analysis on my observations as a passenger, they could have reached their own conclusions on the same evidence. When asked their thoughts on these napkins, their responses ranged from “I don’t think there is a problem with it,” to an agreement that when it is not clear to a viewer that Tlingit people were not put in charge of how their culture is produced and created the art does not hold as much meaning. For one woman, this example led her to state that “how we evolve and how we use our art forms to address today’s problems ... should be up to us as Tlingit people.... That is part of being in a living culture.” Alaska Airlines could claim to be supporting this sentiment by hiring an Alaska Native artist to design its napkin art, and, given the resources that it has at its disposal and the skill of its marketing department, it almost certainly did hire a Native artist. However, a person who receives the napkin on a plane sees only that a Native design is being used by an organization that has very little, if any, identity as a Native organization. Whether they understand this to be an attempt by the airline to act as a non-Native ambassador to Native lands or as an attempt to create an exotic experience of frontier colonialism depends on their critical understanding of the corporation’s motives and the history of

colonial rule in Alaska. Still, though agreeing with the premise of the argument that uncontrolled non-Native organizational use of Tlingit culture removed meaning from that instance of cultural presentation, this woman also minimized Alaska Airlines' cooptation of northwest coast Native designs by changing the topic to describe how “generic” Tlingit art could be used to teach Tlingit culture in schools where both Tlingit and non-Tlingit students would be exposed to it. In this context “generic” is defined as not being owned by a particular clan. Thus the women with whom I interviewed generally did not view this corporate use of Native art as disrespectful as I had originally assumed would be the case.

Use of Tlingit culture within school curriculum is a subject that arose in the interviews almost as often as the racism that is experienced by Tlingit students within the school system. Tlingit culture must be used if it is to be taught within the school. However, to use Tlingit culture without offense, the school system must participate in the Tlingit political process of asking permission from clans for the use of their cultural pieces of art. The school system has yet to undertake this process and has instead relied on using “very generic” Tlingit art of images of Raven and its opposite that, because they are used by so many clans, cannot be claimed by any one clan. One person with whom I interviewed summed up the school system's situation by stating “there have been issues around wanting the Sitka School District to teach the culture and then some confusion on part of the Sitka School District on what they can use and what they can't use. What is owned by other clans and what isn't, for instance.” In this case, some people in the Tlingit community believed that allowing the Sitka School District to use their culture to teach students would be beneficial to the Tlingit community, but they also had in place cultural systems through which people and organizations must proceed before using cultural property. While the renaming of a school was a project that the school system could accomplish, though perhaps not with the proper amount of resources required, to create more substantive change within the

curriculum instead of a more superficial change in image was beyond the amount of resources to which the school system would commit. An insistence on the proper procedures would allow cultural sovereignty to be exercised. Ideally the school system would ask for clan permission to teach clan culture in school, perhaps by clan leaders themselves. Through such a process the Tlingit political structure would be strengthened through its use and validation by the western institution of academia.

While there are many examples of schools basing their curriculum on Indigenous epistemologies, especially in schools that use Indigenous languages, most, if not all of these examples in the United States are charter schools. Examples of these schools are the Hawaiian language schools²⁷² and the Effie Kokrine Charter School in Fairbanks. Because public schools serve all students and distribute resources evenly among students, to have a public school engage with local Native cultural systems would be even more empowering to both the non-Native users of the Native culture as well as the Indigenous systems that would be engaged.

The result of the school not participating in the Indigenous cultural procedures for asking permission for clan cultural property has resulted in schools using Tlingit imagery simply to replace non-critical parts of western curricula. One woman cited an instance in Juneau, Alaska of a school using Tlingit imagery as the objects in a math lesson on measurement. She recounted that

unfortunately, I've seen curriculum where they are [using Tlingit culture without incorporating the protocol associated with it]. Juneau has taken some of that stuff into the school, and they are trying to do it ... where I'm working, but they are throwing all that stuff aside and just taking, "well, you can use measurements for this, and that is how we

²⁷²William H. Wilson, Kauanoe Kamanā, and Nāmaka Rawlins, "Nāwahī Hawaiian laboratory school," *Journal of American Indian Education* 45, no. 2 (2006): 42-44.

can get it into the school.” But you know, it is just trying to make it too non-Native, [the] stuff that you are having to learn, rather than, why was this done? And some of the answers we don't have ... I'm trying to figure out what it is. It is all up here [in the head], the knowledge for the schools, the textbooks. That is what they want the kids to learn. Rather than how [a person feels] about it.... I remember somebody saying, “you can either learn this way [through your head] or you can learn this way [through your heart], or you can learn to do both.” And I feel like a lot of it is in their head now.

While the school was trying to integrate Tlingit culture into its curriculum in order to better serve the Tlingit community, its decontextualized use of snippets of Tlingit culture suggests only a willingness to replace dispensable curricula with token representations. Due to the association of Tlingit culture with objects of little value in the school setting, this woman concluded that the resulting use of Tlingit culture was “too non-Native.” In this discussion of how Tlingit culture is being used by non-Tlingit organizations, it is important to note that it was not the culture itself became non-Native, but that the context that gave meaning to the culture that the school was using was missing. The rest of her statement makes this clear when she speaks of the importance of learning from the heart instead of from the head. By learning from the heart she is suggesting that it is important to have a desire to know why the culture is the way it is and to position oneself as a student of the culture and the people whose culture it is. Allowing schools to believe that they are teaching culturally relevant Tlingit culture when they are placing Tlingit culture in throwaway positions that have no significance in western culture guarantees that the culture will not be accorded the value that will induce students to ask the questions needed allow them to develop a desire to know the depth and context of Tlingit culture.

Similarly, Kauanoe Kamanā, a Native Hawaiian director of laboratory school programs in Hawai'i, states in an article titled “Reflections and feelings deriving from a pulakaumaka

within my heart” that a Native Hawaiian “proverb is I ka 'ōlelo nō ke ola; I ka 'ōlelo nō ka make, 'Language is the source of life and language is the source of death'; but just speaking the Hawaiian language is not the full vision. Revitalizing our Hawaiian maui, our Hawaiian life force, through the Hawaiian language is our full vision. Our language will not be true if it does not relate to all aspects of our maui ... It is not verified simply by shallow acts and showy pretensions.”²⁷³ Kamanā's use of the phrase “within my heart” in her title illustrates the strength of the image of the heart as a symbol of humanity, identity, and a sense of belonging when speaking about the self. Similarly, the woman who interviewed with me used the heart as a metaphor so as to show the importance of love, caring and humanity in the learning and making sense of culture.²⁷⁴ Kamanā's statement, that speaking language itself is not “the full vision,” directly relates to the sentiment of the women with whom I interviewed that simply placing Tlingit imagery in schools is not enough to inspire students to care about Tlingit culture and give an understanding of the history and humanity of Tlingit people. Kamanā's statement further supports this woman's sentiment in stressing that the use of an aspect of culture, language in this case, “will not be true” unless it is connected through teaching and action to the culture, people and land from which it came. This similarity is especially true of the woman's statement that the decontextualized used of Tlingit culture makes the use of culture “too non-Native.” Finally, Kamanā's reference to “shallow acts and showy pretensions” captures the use of Tlingit images in Juneau schools, however well-meaning the teachers may have been, as well as the changing of the name of a public school to a Tlingit language name while refusing to allocate resources to explore in depth how Tlingit culture can become part of the curriculum and of student's academic lives.

²⁷³ Kauanoe Kamanā, “Reflections and Feelings Deriving from a Pulakaumaka within my Heart,” in *A Will to Survive: Indigenous Essays on the Politics of Culture, Language, and Identity*, ed. Stephen Greymorning (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 205.

²⁷⁴ See also Mercurieff and Roderick, *Stop Talking*, 7, 10.

Kamanä's statement partially defines “true” culture. While words like this most often bring up the question of authenticity, here she is primarily addressing the topic of completeness and then suggesting that it can relate to authenticity. Kamanä's use of the word “true” acknowledges that the Hawaiian culture can develop and change as a whole as it and all other cultures always have. However, unless culture is taught and used in its complete context and not just sampled when convenient, it will not support access to Native Hawaiian understanding of the world, or “mauli.” Thus, Kamanä states, “true,” authentic use of culture cannot be achieved unless it is connected to the ontology from which it comes. One woman with whom I interviewed expressed the understanding of Tlingit culture by stating, “I look at the spirituality being land-based, or Tlingit Aaní. They say [the term means] Tlingit land, but it is more of a Tlingit worldview. And it is a worldview that comes from our way of life. And the context is probably even bigger than I can understand. Or anyone [can].” Here, like Kamanä, the woman referred to a specific aspect of culture. Instead of language, she began with spirituality and then connected it to aaní, a term that has been recently been used by Native corporations and non-profits to refer to land. However, she challenged that definition as too narrow. Her definition of aaní approached that of Native Hawaiian mauli. It is a worldview, a basis for Tlingit understanding and philosophy. However, it is useful that the term aaní has been recently translated as “land,” as that allows us to more easily understand land-based colonialism and imperialism in relation to the appropriation of philosophies, spiritualities and more abstract forms of culture. This, in turn, allows us to relate western histories of violence against Tlingit people over land and resources to an understanding of the harm that may exist in using Tlingit culture outside of its original context. Likewise, the broader definition of aaní evokes a world where Tlingit theory is identified and used to create the basis for Tlingit research and Tlingit life.

That the original critique of schools' superficial use of Tlingit culture as removed from a

supporting Tlingit cultural structure would lead to a discussion of ontology and authenticity is striking, especially given that the original statement referenced the difference between feeling with the heart and thinking with the head. This same discussion is the crux of many recent discussions on Indigenous research methodologies as a difference between western reliance on perceived objectivity and Indigenous persistence in recognizing the importance of subjective studies.

Appropriating allyship: white people's place in Native organizations

In all cases of non-Tlingit organizational use of Tlingit culture brought up by the women with whom I interviewed, when the exchange of the aspect of culture was not initiated by a Tlingit person the non-Tlingit organization benefited in a way that cannot be controlled by the Tlingit community. This lack of control stems from the inability of the Tlingit community to constrain the mainstream production of knowledge due to social marginalization, racism, colonialism and imperialism. Western violence against Tlingit people and other Alaska Native peoples has always relied on the control of the construction of knowledge backed by military control and physical violence. Though not related in this project due to space, these women's stories of classroom violence and overt community racism act as a point on the continuum of violence including Russian slavery and bombardment, US naval strikes²⁷⁵ and genocide through forcibly and systematically separating children from families.²⁷⁶ To illustrate the connection between the control of knowledge and physical violence, Andrea Smith, as mentioned in chapter three, demonstrates through the historical and current use of the word “to know” that knowledge, when used without permission, is equivalent to rape. When applying this extraction to the use of Native American culture, she states that “the primary reason for the continuing genocide against

²⁷⁵Reckley, “Angoon Account of Bombardment.”

²⁷⁶Russell, “Language, Violence, and Indian Mis-education,” 99-100.

Native peoples has less to do with ignorance and more to do with material conditions” that she equates to access to and possession of Indian land. She arrives at this statement through the observation that western people, and especially white people, have shown a desire to learn about Indigenous peoples, but that, despite their continuing acquisition of knowledge about Native American peoples, the constructions of knowledge produced by non-Indigenous people have not ceased to promote a racist and colonialist society. She then asks what drives non-Indigenous people to interact with Indigenous peoples in the first place and is left with²⁷⁷ their clear desire for the resources located on the land controlled by Native American, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian peoples.²⁷⁸

The portion of this conclusion that focuses on the professed western desire for education on Nativeness is a reflection of part of an essay presenting in 1980 by Audre Lorde, whose insight is worth repeating here at length. She states:

As a forty-nine-year-old Black lesbian feminist socialist mother of two, including one boy, and a member of an interracial couple, I usually find myself a part of some group defined as other, deviant, inferior, or just plain wrong. Traditionally, in american society, it is the members of oppressed, objectified groups who are expected to stretch out and bridge the gap between the actualities of our lives and the consciousness of our oppressor. For in order to survive, those of us for whom oppression is as american as apple pie have always had to be watchers, to be familiar with the language and manners of the oppressor, even sometimes adopting them for some illusion of protection. Whenever the need for some pretense of communication arises, those who profit from our oppression call upon us to share our knowledge with them. In other words, it is the responsibility of the oppressed to

²⁷⁷Here she qualifies her logic by stating that she is simplifying, for the sake of argument, a complex process.

²⁷⁸Andrea Smith, “Spiritual Appropriation as Sexual Violence,” 97-99.

teach the oppressors their mistakes. I am responsible for educating teachers who dismiss my children's culture in school. Black and Third World people are expected to educate white people as to our humanity. Women are expected to educate men. Lesbians and gay men are expected to educate the heterosexual world. The oppressors maintain their position and evade responsibility for their own actions. There is a constant drain of energy which might be better used in redefining ourselves and devising realistic scenarios for altering the present and constructing the future.²⁷⁹

While Andrea Smith's analysis of the appropriation of Native information focuses on how it is a cover for the western capitalist project and Lorde's description of western desire for education assumes that education is a necessary part of ending oppression, Lorde's summary contains a similar skepticism of sincerity in white intentions to Smith's theory. When Lorde states that "Whenever the need for some pretense of communication arises, those who profit from our oppression call upon us to share our knowledge with them," she hints, especially through the use of the word "pretense," at a world where white people's desire for knowledge need only be based on flimsy excuses for discussion and enlightenment. One of Lorde's concluding statements, that "The oppressors maintain their position and evade responsibility for their own actions," shows her perception that despite the education provided, the social status quo is maintained. These two sentences comport with Andrea Smith's understanding of the reasons for western desire of Native knowledge.

One woman with whom I interviewed echoed Lorde's statement that "traditionally, in american society, it is the members of oppressed, objectified groups who are expected to stretch out and bridge the gap between the actualities of our lives and the consciousness of our oppressor." This woman was involved in a discussion over whether the Sitka camp of the Alaska

²⁷⁹ Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 114-15.

Native Sisterhood should show a film at the Alaska Native Brotherhood Hall or at the new auditorium at the public high school. She related that,

there is a discussion, and I'll say ANS is half Native and half non-Native. And most of the Natives are actually older women. And the non-Native are, well, younger than me, but not real old. They were talking about showing the movie and [one] non-Native ... was saying "It should be at the performing arts center so the non-Natives will show up to watch it." And at that point I got mad. I said "I'm sick and tired of Natives having to make the effort. I feel the non-Natives should have to make the effort. If they want to see this movie, they can come down to the hall and see it." And I was really mad by then, and she was getting mad: "If we want the non-Natives to see it then we have to meet them halfway." And I was like, "That is what I just said: we shouldn't have to do it. The non-Natives need to do it." And she just wouldn't stop and then all the other ladies were just kind of sitting there looking at us. You know like "What is going on?" I said, "ok, I've had enough." I got up and I walked out. I didn't go back for a while. Until my mom said, you're letting the non-Natives run the ANS meetings? And at ANB, too, the second highest position, the vice-president is non-Native. The vice-president of finance is non-Native. I just get upset. It is like "you guys need to form an auxiliary. ANS should only be Native. ANS auxiliary should be non-Natives." You know, this is how I feel. If you do that, I'll come back. That is why I feel bad because it is supposed to be a Native organization.

This narrative, because non-Native members of ANB and ANS are often adopted, offers a good example of how non-Native individuals can use their status as adopted members to access greater power within Native political structures. The narrative also demonstrates Lorde's point on education. The main argument that this woman presents in the discussion is that non-Native people should be expected to carry a greater burden when participating in ANS sponsored events.

The similarity in language is striking when the statement that “if we want the non-Natives to see it then we have to meet them halfway” is juxtaposed with Lorde's statement that “it is the members of oppressed, objectified groups who are expected to stretch out and bridge the gap.” Not only do both use metaphorical language of distance in the phrases “meet them halfway,” “stretch out,” and “bridge the gap,” but also Lorde's understanding of white expectations of people of color is upheld in the example that this woman remembers. The result of this discussion was that, due to the non-Native member's insistence on a more non-Native-friendly venue and the frustration of the woman interviewed with the lack of understanding of white privilege, as described by Lorde, this Native woman temporarily left the organization.

This narrative also addresses the Nateness of the ANB and ANS. By stating that the Alaska Native Sisterhood “is supposed to be a Native organization,” this woman speaks to the power that membership and the identity of leaders have on the image of an organization, and indicates that, based on her understanding of the current membership, the organization has failed to maintain its Nateness. That fact that she temporarily left the organization because of non-Native interactions further increased the proportion of active non-Native people in the organization and thus further decreased the Nateness of the organization. This dilemma brings to mind quota systems that have been used to increase demographic diversity. While quotas are problematic in that they decrease the focus of other aspects of a person's identity in favor of emphasizing the desired member trait, when the extent to which U.S. society avoids discussions of race is examined, perhaps quotas can be a useful tool to address racism in member-based organizations that have historically addressed race-based issues. The solution provided by the woman with whom I interviewed, that non-Native people should be involved through a separate, “auxiliary,” organization is another option. If well-intentioned white, and other non-Native people, hope to assist the causes Native people have organized through the ANB and ANS, surely

they would have no qualms starting an organization that worked to provide no-strings-attached funding or non-leadership-based volunteer labor for the benefit of Native-led organizations.

A more recent example of Lorde's critique of where responsibility lies in antioppression education can be found in a response to systemic sexism on the internet by blogger Lindy West. She cites Frank Bruni's June 10, 2013 *New York Times* Op-Ed to show that oppression is not about needing to understand more about those who are oppressed, but a need to end oppression and address real resource distribution problems. She states that "possibly the most frustrating of all are the gnashing hordes [on the internet,] constantly demanding that you educate them, educate them, educate them,"²⁸⁰ and then cites Bruni, who reminds us that "Our racial bigotry has often been tied to the ignorance abetted by unfamiliarity, our homophobia to a failure to realize how many gay people we know and respect. Well, women are in the next cubicle, across the dinner table, on the other side of the bed."²⁸¹ While Bruni finds himself "mystified" by these circumstances, one conclusion is simply that the oppressions our society enforces are not based on lack of understanding or contact between people, but our blindness to systemic harm. Of course, this would also suggest that the potential means of reduction of racism and heterosexism that Bruni mentions would not as influenced by the abolishment of "ignorance abetted by unfamiliarity" as he has been led to believe.

Bruni's example and Smith's conclusion also bring up the often cited response of people who have been accused of participating in or benefiting from various forms of oppression. Often a person will cite their relationship to a person who experiences oppression when accused of an act that perpetuates that oppression. In antiracist activism, this is known as the "But I have a Black friend" response. Tim Wise confronts this reaction by stating "personal affinity for

²⁸⁰Lindy West, "Quit Fucking Asking Me Questions" (emphasis in the original).

²⁸¹Frank Bruni, "Sexism's Puzzling Stamina," *New York Times*, 10 June 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/11/opinion/bruni-sexisms-puzzling-stamina.html?emc=eta1&_r=1&.

someone who is of color, or a woman, or LGBT, or whatever, says nothing about how one views the larger group from which those individuals come. After all, there were many whites who supported enslavement and segregation as social systems, and yet, managed to conjure personal kindness for individual black people on a case-by-case basis.”²⁸² This position supports Andrea Smith's theory that white people who are interested in Native culture will not necessarily use their knowledge in a way that will help end racism or colonization. According to this theory, this would even apply those who pursue their interest through asking Native people with whom they have friendships or family ties, though these people are in much better positions to learn about addressing racism by simply listening without asking questions.²⁸³

Place names and pronunciation

One of the most clear examples of colonization when looking at how Tlingit names are used to describe non-Tlingit organizations is found in the name of Sitka itself. Though the structure of the community of Sitka is a bit removed from the structures of the organizations that have so far been examined, for our purposes of identifying power in names, both the organizational structures have power over their own naming and an independent community can operate in a similar manner to member-based participatory organizations. The community of Sitka, like all communities, creates and maintains its own language to address the particular issues that living in the area require.

Geographical names, especially the name of the center of the geography itself, are an

²⁸²Tim Wise, “Playing the Friendship Card: White Lies, White Denial and the Reality of Racism,” *Timwise.org*, 10 April 2012, <http://www.timwise.org/2012/04/playing-the-friendship-card-white-lies-white-denial-and-the-reality-of-racism/>.

²⁸³Ilarion (Larry) Mercurieff, “The Way of the Real Human Being,” in Mercurieff and Roderick, *Stop Talking*, 8-12.

integral part of this vocabulary. The common understanding of the origin of the current²⁸⁴ name of the town is that it is a cyrillicization and anglicization of the Tlingit name Sheet'ká.²⁸⁵ Though Russian officials overtly colonized the name of the community by naming their settlement New Archangel, the process of cyrillicizing and anglicizing instead of maintaining the original pronunciation, can also be considered part of the colonizing process. That the Russian and American people using the land around Sitka presumed that their alphabets were capable of representing the Indigenous description of their own community shows the self confidence western science and arts possessed when examining non-western cultures. This altering of the name to make it more familiar to western pronunciation is similar to the example above of creating of acronyms for Indigenous language-named schools. In both instances, the original language is avoided in preference for a name that relies on western letters and is easier to pronounce.

Even French explorer Charles P.C. Fleurieu, who, in his 1801 report on Étienne Marchand's trading expedition, renames Sitka Sound to “the name that which it has received from its inhabitants” from previously given names that “have no other object than to gratify the caprice or vanity of a navigator,”²⁸⁶ describes his reasons for using the original name as favoring nomenclatural continuity instead of on the knowledge and sovereignty of the Indigenous people of the area. After going into a detailed report on the measurements and positions of geographic features of the sound and the descriptions given by previous geographers, he states that “by substituting the name of Tchinkâtâné to that of Guadalupa and to that of Norfolk ... we should

²⁸⁴Adopted in 1867, according to Donald J. Orth, *Dictionary of Alaska Place Names*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 880.

²⁸⁵This is a shortened of Sheey.at'iká. For one of many translations of the name see Andrew Hope, “On Migrations,” in *Will the Time Ever Come? A Tlingit Source Book*, eds. Andrew Hope III and Thomas F. Thornton (Fairbanks, AK: Alaska Native Knowledge Network, 2000), 23.

²⁸⁶Nora Marks Dauenhauer, Richard Dauenhauer, and Lydia Black, *Anóoshi Lingít Aaní Ká, Russians in Tlingit America: The Battles of Sitka, 1802 and 1804* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), xxvi.

preserve the nomenclature of geography, from those variations, annual as it were” of visiting explorers.²⁸⁷ Thus Fleurieu's main concern is not to preserve the cultural and language rights of the Tlingit people, but to avoid confusion among future explorers visiting the complex web of islands that make up Southeast Alaska. This is emphasized in the object of the sentence “I restore to the bay what belongs to it, the name which it has received from its inhabitants.”²⁸⁸ Though this could be a statement recognizing the ownership of the bay by the Tlingit people, Fleurieu's focus is on the bay, and the bay's possessions, not on the will and history the “inhabitants” have in naming the body of water.

One woman, when this example was brought up, stated that the anglicization of Tlingit community names had been a recent topic of conversation. She said of the name of Sitka that, “they should have kept it as Sheet'ká. That, to me, would have been more respectful [to] our language and the culture and the original people that inhabited this area.... Learn how to pronounce it,”²⁸⁹ and “when I traveled in Canada, I thought it was really neat that, more in the northern territories, all their signs were in their original language. Even the names of places. That to me, was so respectful. I couldn't pronounce them, but it was really nice to see.” Here, in her statement that she was not able to pronounce the language on the signs, this woman may be noting that the discomfort she felt in Canada, and that non-Tlingit speakers would have felt in Sitka had there been similar signs posted or had they been unsure of how to pronounce the name of the community they were visiting, would draw attention to the viewer that they were in a land that had a history that did not rely on western society and that some effort on their behalf would be required to demonstrate that they could be a useful part of the community. This effort, when

²⁸⁷Charles P. C. Fleurieu, *A Voyage Round the World 1790-1792 Performed by Étienne Marchand* (Amsterdam: N. Israel, 1801. A facsimile of the first edition. New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), 197-98.

²⁸⁸Dauenhauer, et al., *Anóoshi Lingít Aaní Ká*, xxvi.

²⁸⁹For more on the importance of learning to pronounce Tlingit place names see X'unei Lance Twitchell, “Restoring Alaska Native Placenames: Language Revitalization Through a Re-visioning of Place and Belonging,” Alaska Native Studies Conference, Juneau, AK, 15 March 2014.

put in the context of not burdening one's hosts when one is a guest at a house, can make sense in western society. Requiring non-speakers to become familiar with Tlingit language would place part of the burden of past and continuing colonization on a mostly western portion of the population. However, given the example of Keet Gooshi Heen Elementary School, it is important to remember that the process of changing names is most empowering when it is initiated by the community that has experienced the colonization of the land.

While Russian officials completely renamed Sheet'ká, maybe as a means to solidify their imperial action of controlling the land and resources adjacent to Sitka, US officials used a bastardization of the name, maybe to establish in the minds of local residents that their capital, and they themselves, were a different power with a new set of rules. This use may also show the need that the American people had for legitimizing their claim to the land by demonstrating a tacit reliance on Indigenous culture, and thus access to the land. The name Sitka has now been accepted by western society to the extent that its origin is not questioned. Of course, this lack of inspection allows non-Tlingit people to use the name without realizing or acknowledging their use of Tlingit language.

The vast majority of Sitkan non-Tlingit organizations' possession of Tlingit culture is the result of the non-Indigenous desire within the organizations to create an image of the organization as being more accepting of Tlingit culture when, for the most part, no internal structural changes are made to address racism, colonialism or cultural imperialism. In some cases, the naming is, itself, a continuation of the process of colonization. While the Tlingit community does benefit from cultural gifting when the idea of the gift is initiated within the community and the action of the giving is carried out through the Tlingit political process, non-Tlingit institutional and community memory often do not emphasize the importance of the process of the transfer of the aspect of culture and instead focuses on the importance of the possession. This lack of memory,

when combined with the ability to construct mainstream knowledge, enables non-Tlingit institutions to create their own, sanitized, versions of themselves to the detriment of those who work to point out systemic institutional oppression against the Tlingit community.

CONCLUSION

In an age of the perpetuation of the discussion of whether theorizing on the existence and effects of white privilege contributes to the unequal distribution of resources between racial groups or whether it allows for solutions to emerge from our collective imagination, the topic of how Tlingit culture is used by non-Tlingit people is, from the perspective of the Tlingit women with whom I spoke, in urgent need of airing. Their comments suggest that, not only is non-Tlingit use of Tlingit culture occasionally problematic, but that, when it is seen as inappropriate, it operates in similar, if not identical, ways to the institution of hegemonic colonial control over Indigenous people.

This project examines the response of Tlingit women who have some ties to work that could be construed as feminist to the use of culture by non-Tlingit people and organizations, and compares their response to existing theory on use of Native culture by non-Native people. By examining Nancy Marie Mithlo's theory of representation and applying the theories of Edward Said and Linda Tuhiwai Smith on western repositories of Indigenous knowledge, it is possible to understand the use of Tlingit culture by non-Tlingit people as the unethical appropriation of culture described by Joanna Kadi. This especially occurs when white people, intentionally or not, remove themselves from contact with the Tlingit people with whom they were associated when they were originally granted access to Tlingit culture, or, when white people, even when surrounded by Tlingit people, assume Tlingit identity through injudicious use of pronouns or Tlingit regalia.

Though perhaps I should have expected the topic to present itself prominently, I was surprised at the frequency that the issue of Tlingit adoption of non-Tlingit people and the subsequent behavior of those people who were adopted was raised. Despite the fact that non-Tlingit people adopted into Tlingit clans are invited to do so by Tlingit people, and thus their

adoption is a demonstration of the agency and political power of Tlingit people and culture, the number of examples of inappropriate behavior that were related by the women with whom I interviewed shows that non-Tlingit people must examine any potential privileges based on race and colonial histories even more closely after they are accepted into a clan.

INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence and its collaborators' work on the corporate structure of non-profit organizations demonstrates the ability of institutions to access Nativeness. Whether institutions are created for the benefit of Native people by United States government or whether they serve everyone, their ability to associate with or invite Tlingit people to their events as well as their hiring and advancement decisions allow the organization to be perceived by the community as more Tlingit or more "multicultural." Likewise, art used in logos and the names of both organizations themselves or the titles of their members are instrumental in framing the organization as authentically Tlingit, or, at least, not racist. Through these means organizations can construct identities that can be financially beneficial without internalizing the Tlingit context from which the framing is assembled.

Like the structure of adoptions, organizations that are given Tlingit names by Tlingit entities are participating in the extension of and exercise of Tlingit will, however to ethically retain such names they should examine whether their internal policies and inter-organizational behaviors match the intention that initiated the process of their receiving a Tlingit name. The process itself, in fact, should be a continuous series of attempts to understand the contextual implications of a non-Tlingit organization existing in Tlingit land and serving, in part, Tlingit people while at the same time being composed of, most often, non-Tlingit people, especially when those non-Tlingit people assume leadership positions within the organization.

While the women with whom I interviewed certainly offered critiques of institutions that use Tlingit culture improperly, the comments on improper individual use of Tlingit culture were

generally stronger and certainly more numerous. Because our own identities are so important to us, this disparity is understandable: it is easier to overlook the presumptions of an abstract concept such as an organization than the actions of a human whose actions and pronouncements are immediately evident. In other words, our standards are lower for organizations that rely on a false sense of Nativeness than for individuals because the decisions people within organizations make are masked by the structure and potential lack of transparency that organizational structures provide.

It is clear that the non-Tlingit organizations and individuals who use Tlingit culture benefit from that use, both through the implication that their use indicates a more tolerant or more progressive political stance, as well as through the labeling of non-Tlingit people who use Tlingit culture as more expert on Tlingit issues. Whether, however, Tlingit people benefit at all, equally, or more, from non-Tlingit use of culture, is central to this thesis. Unsurprisingly, this project shows that there is a range of opinion on what, if any, benefits exist, and, following this, what uses are acceptable.

However, this research also shows that existing theory on cultural appropriation, both that that is created in the United States as well as throughout the world, applies to the understanding that the Tlingit women I interviewed demonstrated. Since this existing theory largely identifies non-Native use of Native culture as racially problematic and counter to the realization of Native sovereignty, the applicability of the theory indicates that any non-Tlingit use of Tlingit culture be undertaken with an understanding of an exact reasoning of why that use is needed and who benefits most directly from that use.

Because I interviewed just seven people, the results of this thesis are not generalizable. Nevertheless, this work can be useful to those non-Tlingit people who are considering using Tlingit culture and who wish to examine how non-Native people use white privilege, colonialism,

gender oppression and non-profit corporate structures to remove the context from Tlingit culture. This research provides guidance for critically examining how they or their organizations benefit from that decontextualized cultural association with Tlingit people. While I have not presumed to provide definitive answers to the question of what use is appropriate and what use is appropriative, I hope this analysis offers insight into the potential harm that is possible when unethical use of Tlingit culture is identified.

The root of this project lies in the political decision to research those who are accustomed to doing the researching. Though I have chosen to interview Tlingit people, the ultimate subjects of my inquiries, as well as the target audience for the results of this project, are non-Native people in Sitka. Of these non-Native people, white people are especially highlighted, both by the narratives of the women with whom I interviewed, as well as through my own desire to understand my position as a white person in Tlingit land. This desire could be seen as a narcissism in which we white people often participate, though most often the narratives related by these women were not flattering. To be sure, the examination of privilege to achieve a better understanding of conditions that are systematically avoided due to the disturbing historical and current realities of racism and colonial violence that present themselves so readily when looked for outside of white culture generates deep discomfort. However, Linda Tuhiwai Smith recounts that, in her pursuit of answers that would address how the Maori people, of which she is one, could become more healthy, she was asked “why do [non-Maori] always think by looking at us they will find the answers to our problems, why don't they look at themselves?”²⁹⁰ It is the work of researchers to examine all realities on our journey towards truth. This must include examination of ourselves, especially when “ourselves” is the formally recognized, and largely white, institution of academia, and especially when we are given the opportunity to do so through

²⁹⁰Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 198.

the eyes of others, despite any discomforts that may result.

In general, I am pleased with the methods I employed in this project. Lacking time and travel opportunities to review interview data with those with whom I interviewed was my greatest frustration with the process of conducting research. While the conversations I had would not have occurred to the extent they did without the impetus provided by the academic program in which I enrolled, ultimately the women upon whom I imposed my requests for conversations shaped this project with their patience, enthusiasm and insight into the topic. As demonstrated, the conversations themselves led to conversations between Tlingit community members that raised an awareness of commonly held beliefs. In this way, this research has already achieved its goal of creating change.

Future work might pursue the same question as this project but with the inclusion of a broader spectrum and larger number of Tlingit people. Other projects might identify how Tlingit people view use of other popular aspects of Tlingit culture, such as food preparation and consumption, by non-Tlingit people. Finally, and especially given its connection to understandings of colonialism, these questions should be further examined in the context of who has legitimate access to Tlingit resources and whether accessing Tlingit culture can be found to be equivalent to accessing Tlingit land.

Whether or not this project inspires future studies, my hope is that it challenges the blanket assumption that all use of Tlingit culture, especially of Tlingit art, to increase the perception of a non-Tlingit entity into one that can be seen as more Native is beneficial to the Tlingit community.

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APPENDIX A



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Institutional Review Board

909 N Koyukuk Dr. Suite 212, P.O. Box 757270, Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-7270

November 22, 2011

To: Sine Anahita
Principal Investigator
From: University of Alaska Fairbanks IRB
Re: [254309-3] Responses to cultural appropriation of Tlingit art

Thank you for submitting the Amendment/Modification referenced below. The submission was handled by Expedited Review under the requirements of 45 CFR 46.110, which identifies the categories of research eligible for expedited review.

Title:	Responses to cultural appropriation of Tlingit art
Received:	November 22, 2011
Expedited Category:	7
Action:	APPROVED
Effective Date:	November 22, 2011
Expiration Date:	November 22, 2012

This action is included on the December 15, 2011 IRB Agenda.

No changes may be made to this project without the prior review and approval of the IRB. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in research scope, research tools, consent documents, personnel, or record storage location.

APPENDIX B



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Institutional Review Board

909 N Koyukuk Dr. Suite 212, P.O. Box 757270, Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-7270

November 20, 2012

To: Sine Anahita
Principal Investigator
From: University of Alaska Fairbanks IRB
Re: [254309-4] Responses to cultural appropriation of Tlingit art

Thank you for submitting the Continuing Review/Progress Report referenced below. The submission was handled by Expedited Review under the requirements of 45 CFR 46.110, which identifies the categories of research eligible for expedited review.

Title:	Responses to cultural appropriation of Tlingit art
Received:	November 15, 2012
Expedited Category:	7
Action:	APPROVED
Effective Date:	November 20, 2012
Expiration Date:	November 22, 2013

This action is included on the December 6, 2012 IRB Agenda.

No changes may be made to this project without the prior review and approval of the IRB. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in research scope, research tools, consent documents, personnel, or record storage location.

APPENDIX C

University of Alaska Fairbanks Institutional Review Board Approval Date: Expiration Date:
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Statement of Informed Consent for Research Participation
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Title of Project: Tlingit feminist response to use of Tlingit culture by white people and other non-Native people in Sitka, Alaska

Researcher: David Kreiss-Tomkins, graduate student
d_kreiss-tomkins@riseup.net

Northern Studies Department
Gruening 611B
University of Alaska, Fairbanks
Fairbanks, AK 99775

805 Charles St.
Sitka, Alaska 99835
phone: 907.747.5387

Purpose of the Study: You are being asked to take part in a study looking at the use of Native Tlingit culture by non-Native people. This study is being led by David Kreiss-Tomkins, a student at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. You are being asked to take part in this study because you may identify as a Tlingit woman in Sitka, Alaska who is an artist and activist. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before you agree to be in the study.

Procedures: You may be asked to take part in 2-4 individual and group interviews from Oct 2011 to Jan 2012. Through this form you allow the researchers to look at notes and recordings of these interviews. You will also be asked to write an evaluation at the end of each interview or discussion.

Compensation for Being in this Study: You will be given \$50 for your time.

Potential Benefits of Being in this Study: As a result of this study, ownership of Tlingit culture may be more often acknowledged outside of Tlingit communities.

Potential Risks of Being in this Study: Individual interviews require some periods of sitting. Because of this, organizers will make sure there are enough breaks. Because ownership of Native culture is such a political topic, you will be given a safe space to talk about issues of Native cultural ownership. You will not be required to be in discussions that cause emotional discomfort.

Statement of Confidentiality: If you do not wish to be identified as a participant in this study, we will make sure that data that could show who you are will not be made public. All personal identifiers will be deleted. Access to the data collected will be limited to the research team.

UAF's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and members of David's committee may also review

records related to this project.

If you wish to remain anonymous, please notify project staff. In the event that the results of this study are presented or published, all data will be reported in such a way that you cannot be identified.

Duration of Study: The study will be done from October 2011 to January 2012. We estimate that individual interviews may take 30-50 minutes to complete. Any group sessions will be led within this time period.

This section describes your rights as a research participant:

You may ask questions about the research study. These questions will be answered. Questions should be directed to David Kreiss-Tomkins (907-747-5387, d_kreiss-tomkins@riseup.net). You may also contact UAF's IRB at 907-474-7800.

You are free to choose whether or not to be in this study. You are free to stop being in this study at any time. You do not have to answer questions you do not wish to answer. You do not need to give any reasons for doing so.

This section shows that you are giving informed consent to participate in this study:

You agree to be in a research study being led by David Kreiss-Tomkins. Being in this study involves two steps. The first is to allow us to record your responses to group and individual interviews in writing and/or via audio or video recordings. The second is to write an evaluation at the end of each interview.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study.

Please state what you would like by placing an X on any of the statements that apply to you below. Then sign and return one copy of this form. Keep one copy for your records.

____ I agree to be identified by name in any transcript or reference to any information contained in this interview.

____ I wish to be anonymous in any transcript or reference to any information contained in this interview.

____ I wish to list how I would like my name or other personal information to be used. (Please list any restrictions on the next page of this form.)

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher Signature

Date

Statement of Informed Consent for Research Participation**University of Alaska Fairbanks****Title of Project:** Tlingit feminist response to use of Tlingit culture by white people and other non-Native people in Sitka, Alaska**Restrictions Regarding Identification of Participant:**

APPENDIX D

8 January 2012

Dear

Enclosed you will find two copies of the transcript of the interviews that we conducted, a flashdrive with the text copies and audio files of the interviews, a red pen and an envelope. There is also a copy of a draft chapter of my thesis enclosed.

With the red pen one copy of the transcript, please review the interview and make any corrections you see fit. Remember that I can still remove any content from the interviews with which you are not comfortable, but that after I publish my thesis I will not be able to alter the material. Then, place the corrected copy in the envelope and send it to me.

The transcripts do not list the speaker. In general each paragraph separation indicates a change in speaker. You may also find a variation in the quality of my transcriptions as I developed as a transcriber. My apologies for any early mistakes. I will always double check the recording for any discussion that I use in my thesis to make sure that the words and intentions behind the words are correct.

There are many typos in my transcriptions, grammar mistakes in our speech and sentences that are not finished. Please do not spend time correcting typos and grammar. I will make sure that any statements you made make sense grammatically and, of course, have no misspellings. Please instead focus on spellings of names of people, Tlingit words and clarifying the meanings of the topics of our conversations.

If you have requested confidentiality, I have removed your name from the transcript. However, often we talk about family members and friends. These connections, of course, also influence how confidential your identity will remain. If you are uncomfortable with these names being mentioned, please cross out those names and give a description of how I can best maintain your confidentiality.

I have also included a sample of a draft chapter to give you an example of how our conversations will be used in my thesis. If you have time, please look it over to see if you are comfortable with my approach.

Please make sure your flash drive works, I had a bit of trouble loading with the connection when loading information onto them.

Thank you for your patience in this process. I have been working very slowly and have already asked for an enormous amount of your time and energy. Any comments and review of this material will be hugely valuable to me.

Sincerely,

David Kreiss-Tomkins
805 Charles St./Sitka, AK 99835
P.O. Box 751707/Fairbanks, AK 99835
d_kreiss-tomkins@riseup.net